

# HISTORY of WAR



**BURMA  
BRIDGE BUSTER**

VET REMEMBERS JUNGLE  
SABOTAGE WITH FORCE 136

WWI BATTLE FOR PALESTINE

# CHARGE OF THE LIGHT HORSE

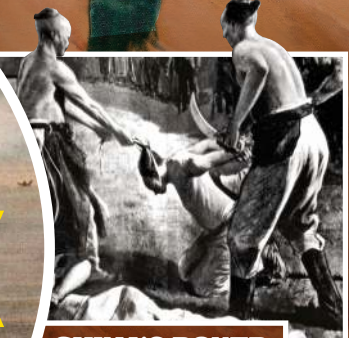
How Australia's hard-riding heroes turned the tide in the Middle East

**GALLIPOLI TRAGEDY**  
NEW ANALYSIS OF "MURDER" AT THE NEK



**ROYAL NAVY VS SLAVERY**

THE WEST AFRICA SQUADRON SAILED OUT TO SHATTER CHAINS



**CHINA'S BOXER REBELLION**

How Qing insurgency ended in humiliation



**THE BLOODY BATTLE OF VARNA**

The 15th-century clash that gave the Balkans to the Turks



**VICTORIA'S HAMMER**

Garnet Wolesley's ingenuity saved Britain's colonial empire

Future

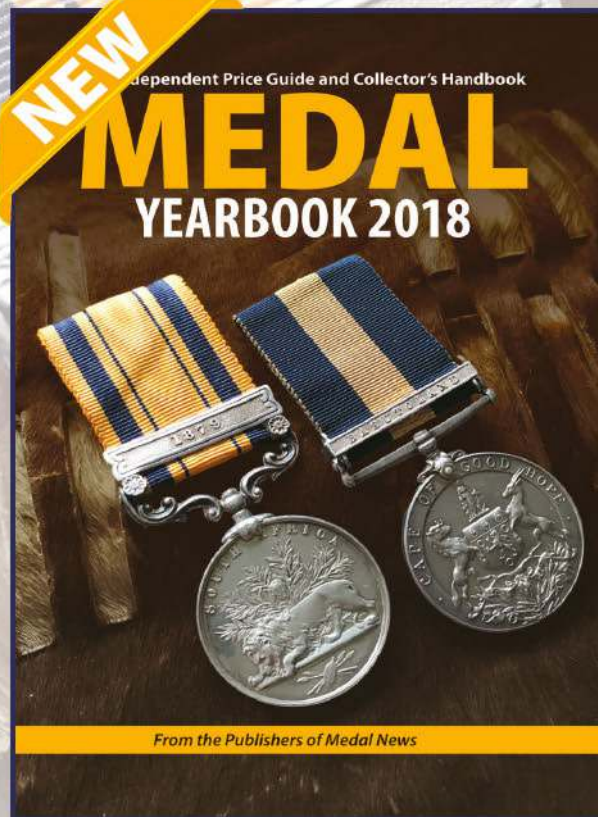
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# Welcome

**“Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace”**

– Attributed to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk


**A**ccounts of WWI campaigns often come laden with their own controversies and biases, mixing cold, hard facts with national remembrance, mythology and even ideology. Even the authenticity of Atatürk’s profound words of reconciliation, adorning numerous Anzac memorials, has been questioned by some historians.

What cannot be questioned is the immense sacrifice of Anzac troops, who distinguished themselves in the trenches of the Western Front, as well as at Gallipoli and in Palestine. This issue explores how Australia’s Light Horse regiments left their

own mark on these latter campaigns, particularly during two very different charges at the Nek and Beersheba.



**Tim Williamson**  
Editor

 **EMAIL**  
timothy.williamson@futurenet.com

## CONTRIBUTORS



**TOM GARNER**

This month Tom was privileged to interview Dr Robert Callow about his experiences serving on sabotage missions in Burma during WWII (p. 46). You can read the conclusion of this incredible story in the next issue of *History of War*.



**MIGUEL MIRANDA**

In the third and final part of his history of the Bangladesh War of Independence, Miguel looks at how the brief but bloody conflict came to a dramatic end, leaving behind a new nation and a precarious balance of power in South Asia (p. 66).



**DAVID SMITH**

Shortly after the 1807 Slave Trade Act was passed, the Royal Navy was preparing to take the fight to slaver vessels still operating in the Atlantic Ocean. Over on page 60 David explores the incredible story of the West Africa Squadron.

[www.historyanswers.co.uk](http://www.historyanswers.co.uk)

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*The charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beersheba on 31 October 1917 has become symbolic of Anzac bravery and daring in WWI*







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Foreign troops of several nations gathered to serve their country's interests in China's turmoil

# MERLIN



# AW101

**88** Celebrating Britain's iconic utility helicopter



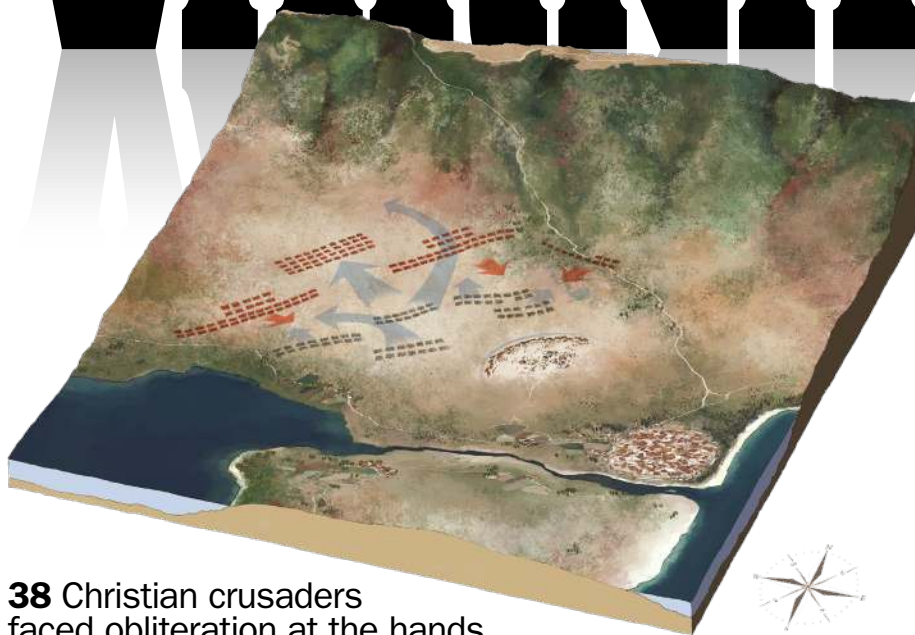
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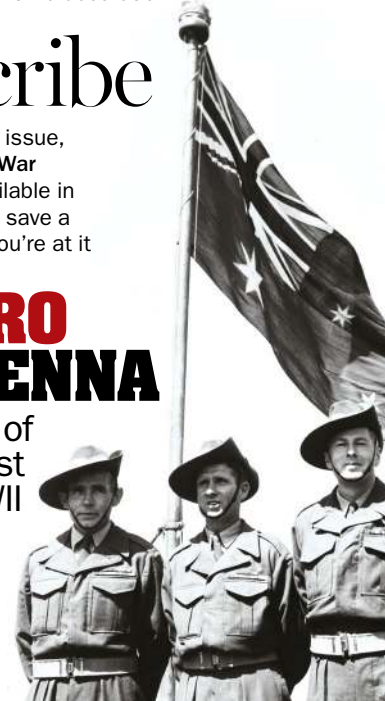
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## VC HERO

# TED KENNA

**74** The story of Australia's last surviving WWII VC recipient





# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## NAPALM BREATH

*Taken: c. 1967*

Close-up of the flamethrower on a tank from the Third Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, as it sprays napalm into bunkers along Route 13. The Blackhorse Regiment arrived in Vietnam in September 1966, and the Third Squadron entered into combat with the Viet Cong shortly after. The regiment earned a Meritorious Unit Citation for its conduct in the campaign.









# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## BATTLE BUDDIES

Taken: c. June 1941

Eric 'Sawn Off' Stanley Lock poses atop his Spitfire with his four-legged mascot. Lock was one of the RAF's top-scoring pilots during the Battle of Britain, claiming eight victories in just one week, which earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross. Lock disappeared when on patrol near Calais later in 1941.



Victory













# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## DOWN ON THE BEACH

*Taken: 31 March 2014*

Republic of Korean (ROK) marines on exercise entrenched on a beach at Doksu-Ri, Pohang, during a simulated amphibious assault. ROK and American marines regularly conduct beach-assault training scenarios in an effort to maintain combat readiness, as well as to test and prepare for wartime scenarios.











**WAR**<sub>in</sub>  
**FOCUS**  
**CHILD'S PLAY**

*Taken: 22 August 1994*

An armed child fighter with the Liberia Peace Council (LPC) poses with a gun at a military training facility during the Liberian Civil War. During the war the LPC and National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) were both responsible for severe human rights abuses, and the conflict killed over 250,000 people.



# TIMELINE OF THE BOXER REBELLION

As violence escalates in China, Western nations take military action against the Boxers, raising the Siege of the International Legations

## BATTLE OF SENLUO TEMPLE

Despite divided loyalties in the Chinese government, Qing troops defeat the Boxers in a pitched battle. Executions of Boxer leaders follow. However, unrest continues to spread across northern China.

18 October 1899

1 November 1897

## JUYE INCIDENT

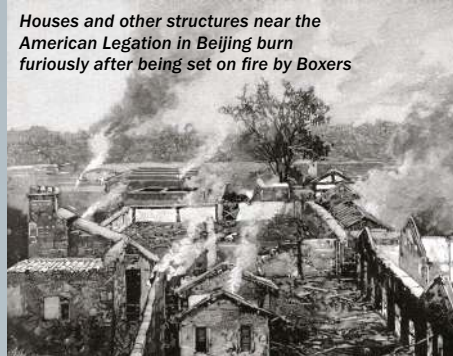
A mob of Chinese radicals murders two German Roman Catholic missionaries in Juye, Shandong Province. The incident is a harbinger of the violence to come with the Boxer Rebellion.



This German drawing depicts the murders of missionaries Richard Henle and Franz Xavier Nies in Shandong Province

## BOXER REBELLION BEGINS

Amid a wave of anti-Western violence, the Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists initiates the uprising dubbed the Boxer Rebellion. After 22 months of unrest, the revolt is put down.



Houses and other structures near the American Legation in Beijing burn furiously after being set on fire by Boxers

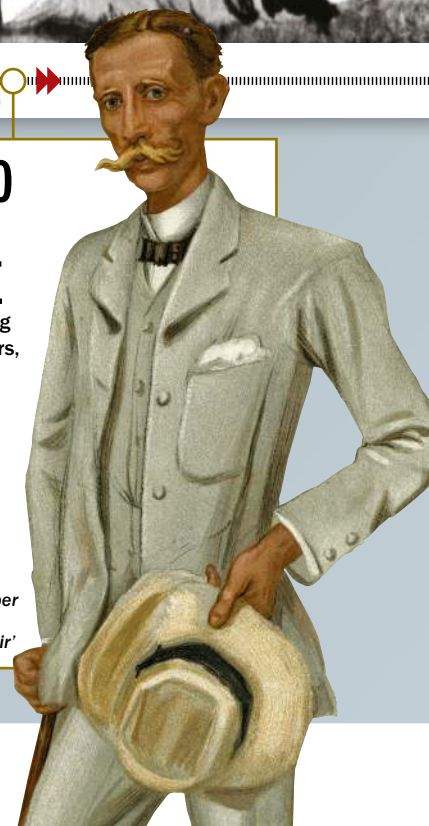
2 November 1899

30 May 1900

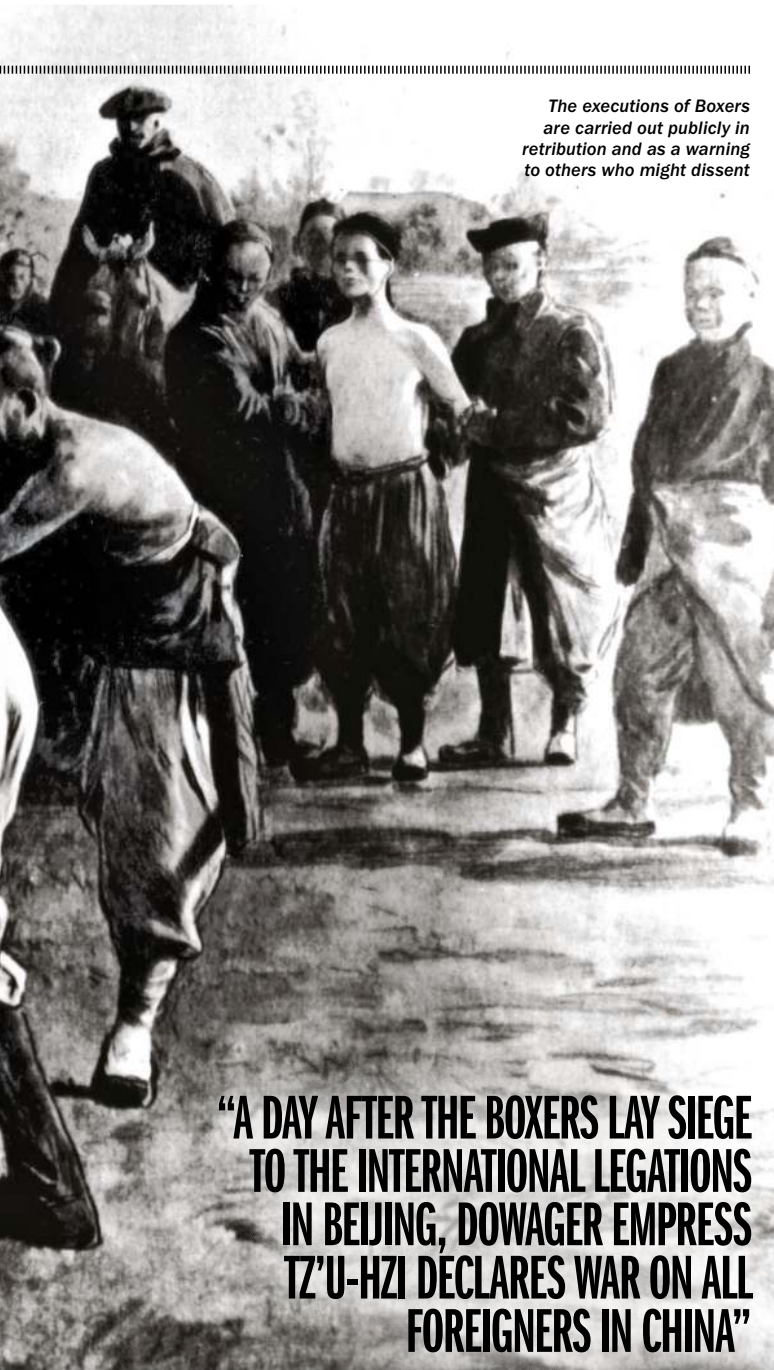
## MACDONALD CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE

Aware of the growing hostility of the Boxers, British minister Sir Claude MacDonald calls for a defence force to protect the legations in Beijing. Chinese authorities allow 400 foreign troops into the city.

This drawing of a dapper Sir Claude MacDonald appeared in 'Vanity Fair'







The executions of Boxers are carried out publicly in retribution and as a warning to others who might dissent

**“A DAY AFTER THE BOXERS LAY SIEGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEGATIONS IN BEIJING, DOWAGER EMPRESS TZ’U-HZI DECLARES WAR ON ALL FOREIGNERS IN CHINA”**



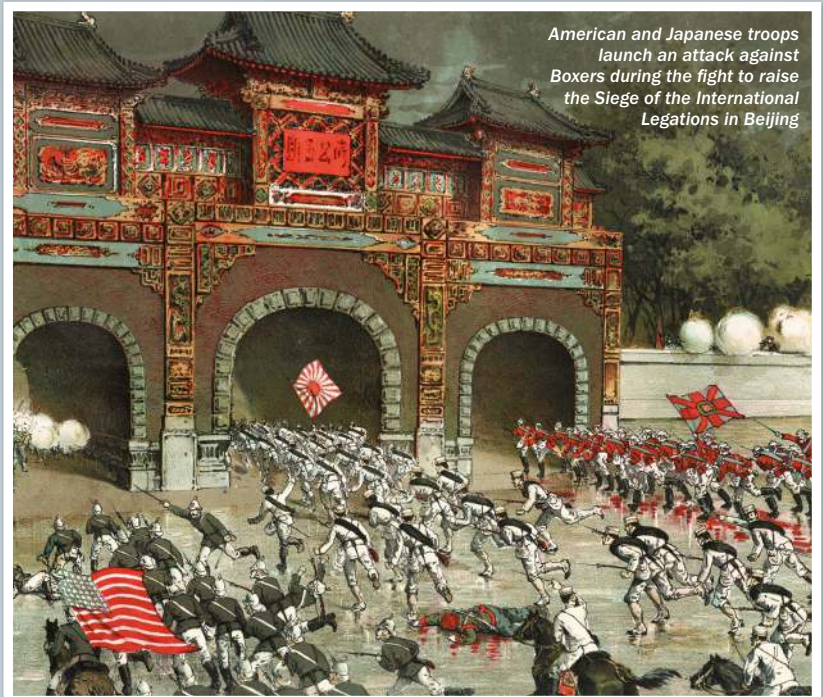
**TZ’U-HZI DECREES WAR**

A day after the Boxers lay siege to the International Legations quarter in Beijing, Dowager Empress Tz’u-Hzi declares war on all foreigners in China, revealing her support for the uprising.

In this German cartoon Dowager Empress Tz’u-Hzi deposes Emperor Guangxu and holds the European powers at bay

**VICTORY IN BEIJING**

After heavy fighting, troops of the Eight-Nation Alliance defeat the Boxers and raise the 55-day Siege of the International Legations in Beijing. The Boxer movement rapidly disintegrates after the defeat.



American and Japanese troops launch an attack against Boxers during the fight to raise the Siege of the International Legations in Beijing

10 June 1900

21 June 1900

14 August 1900

7 September 1901



**SEYMOUR EXPEDITION MARCHES**

A relief expedition of just over 2,000 international troops under Vice Admiral Edward Seymour sets out towards Beijing, only to come to grief against stiff resistance from the Boxers.

Sir Edward Seymour turned his expedition back to Tientsin as casualties mounted in the face of opposition by the Boxers

**BOXER PROTOCOL SIGNED**

The signing of the Boxer Protocol formally ends the rebellion and imposes harsh terms, including reparations of more than \$330 million on the Chinese. Several nations later return their payments to China.

Months after the fighting has essentially ended, Western and Chinese diplomats gather to sign the Boxer Protocol



Images: Alamy



# CLASH OF CULTURES

The rebellion erupted in China amid decades of Western imperialism, the decline of the Qing dynasty and fears that the traditions and heritage of the people were in jeopardy

For more than 200 years the Qing dynasty had ruled China – a country that was to Westerners a vast, mysterious land that seemed to beckon the entrepreneurial, adventurous and ambitious from Europe and America to explore, discover and sometimes exploit. As early as 1793 Emperor Qianlong told Lord McCartney, a British envoy, that China possessed “all things” and neither needed nor desired trade with the industrialising West.

Nevertheless, within half a century the Chinese had suffered defeat in the Opium Wars, utilised first by Britain and later Russia, France, and the United States to open China to trade. As Western influence grew, China’s natural resources were plundered while the people watched the steady imperialist encroachment, seemingly powerless to stem the tide.

Along with European and American incursions came the cultural shock of Western civilization, particularly the introduction of the Christian church. While some Western observers decried the exploitation of the Chinese, others adopted a more paternal perspective. Conversion to Christianity would be positive, they reasoned.

The Chinese were presented as being incapable of managing their own affairs in the modern world. European and American ‘benefactors’ would assist. In 1884 France was victorious in a brief war with China and took control of Indochina (later Vietnam). A decade later Japan, which had by then embraced industrialisation, decisively defeated China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, seizing control of the Korean Peninsula and assuming trade concessions similar to those of the Western powers.

To exacerbate matters, floods, droughts and famines wracked the land, compounding the woes of the Chinese peasant class. In the midst of the upheaval created by grinding poverty in northeastern China rose the Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, a secretive association that practised martial arts and intense physical exercise in the belief that it would make them impervious to injury from the bullets of Western guns. Observers of their regimented exercise routines were reminded of

‘shadow boxing’ and referred to the society’s members as ‘Boxers’.

Their perception of the erosion of Chinese culture, society and political autonomy inevitably drove the Boxers to militancy. In defence of their way of life, the Boxers became violent, anti-Western and anti-Christian while fostering divided loyalties even within the hierarchy of

the ruling Qing dynasty. The Boxer Rebellion raged across the countryside from November 1899 until September 1901 and erupted in the streets of the capital of Beijing and the port city of Tientsin. The Boxers burned churches, threatened the economic interests of Europe and the United States in China, murdered Westerners and killed their own people who had converted from the traditional religion to Christianity. Dowager Empress Tz’u-Hzi restrained the army from suppressing the Boxers as violence escalated in Shandong and Zhili provinces, and went a step further with a declaration of war against any foreign nation with diplomatic or economic ties to China. By the time the Eight-Nation Alliance of Britain, Russia, France, Germany, the United States, Italy and Austria-Hungary had put down the rebellion thousands had died – the majority of them innocent Chinese.

The clash of cultures was inevitable and violence was its predictable by-product. To this day the debate rages as to where real culpability lies. Western imperialism and its lust for power was, without doubt, a contributing factor, as were the series of man-made and natural disasters that had befallen the Chinese people in the decades preceding the Boxer Rebellion. The ineffective leadership of the Qing rulers as their capacity to govern steadily declined, and the militancy of the Boxers bolstered by their disregard for life and property all played a part. Ultimately the Boxer Rebellion was the furious release of pent-up rage against the burgeoning Western philosophy of a ‘better way’ that offered a convenient excuse to exercise imperialism in China.

At times the most salient point in an evaluation of the Boxer Rebellion, its causes and its wretched aftermath is overlooked. Western historians tend to consider the crisis through the prism of Western values and the eyes of those immersed in Western culture. But the Chinese people had developed and lived in a complex society with its own values system and its own perspective on the world long before the first Europeans set foot on the Asian continent. Ultimately both sides were guilty of judging the other culture’s way of life through their own cultural values, which led to misunderstanding and conflict.

**“TO THIS DAY THE DEBATE RAGES AS TO WHERE REAL CULPABILITY LIES”**



**Right:** Ts’u-Hzi, who was effectively ruler of China for almost 50 years, opposed the westernisation of her country



**“OBSERVERS OF THEIR REGIMENTED EXERCISE ROUTINES WERE REMINDED OF ‘SHADOW BOXING’, AND REFERRED TO THE SOCIETY’S MEMBERS AS ‘BOXERS’”**

*This propaganda cartoon depicts the Eight-Nation Alliance as vicious dogs bringing down the weary Chinese empire*

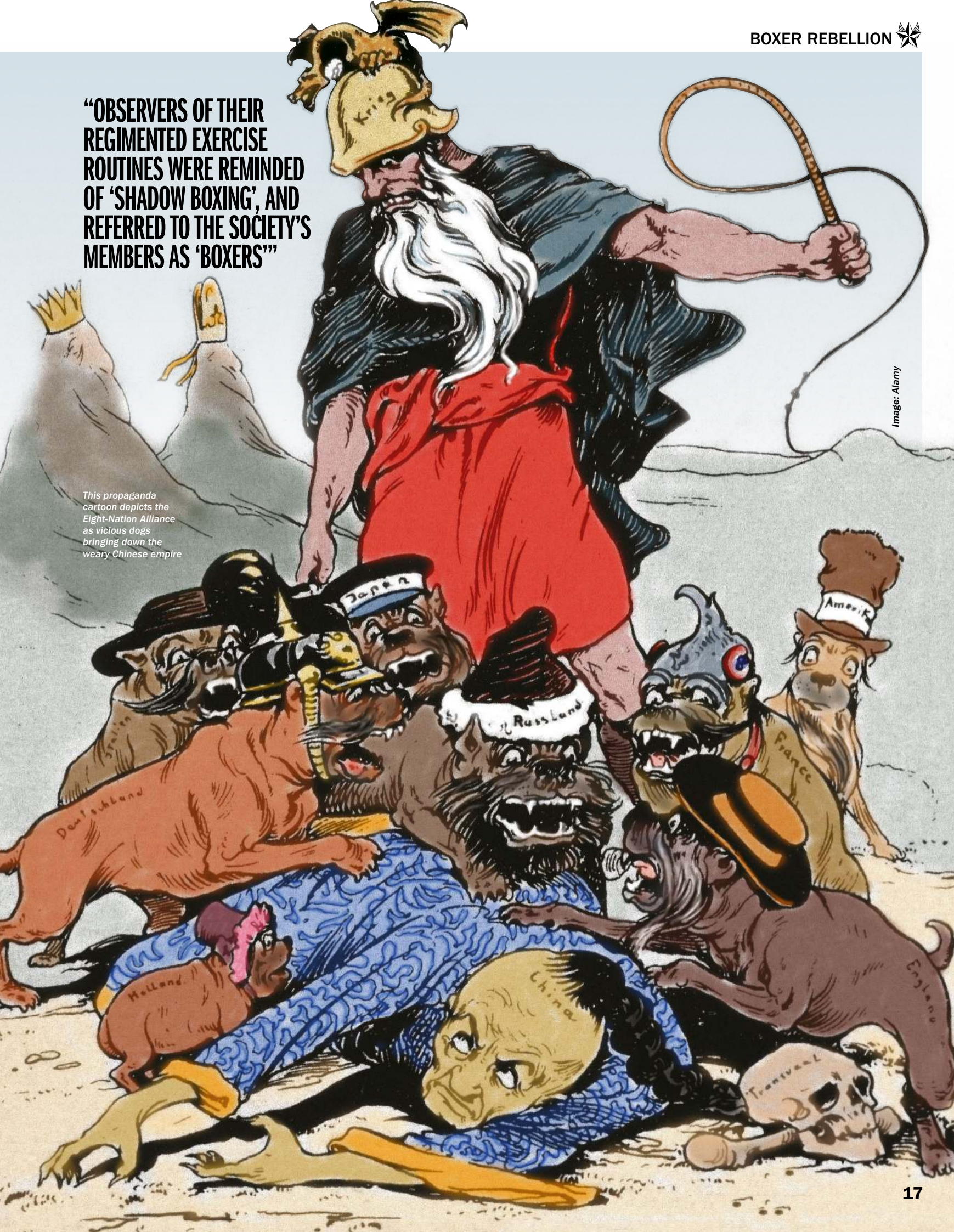
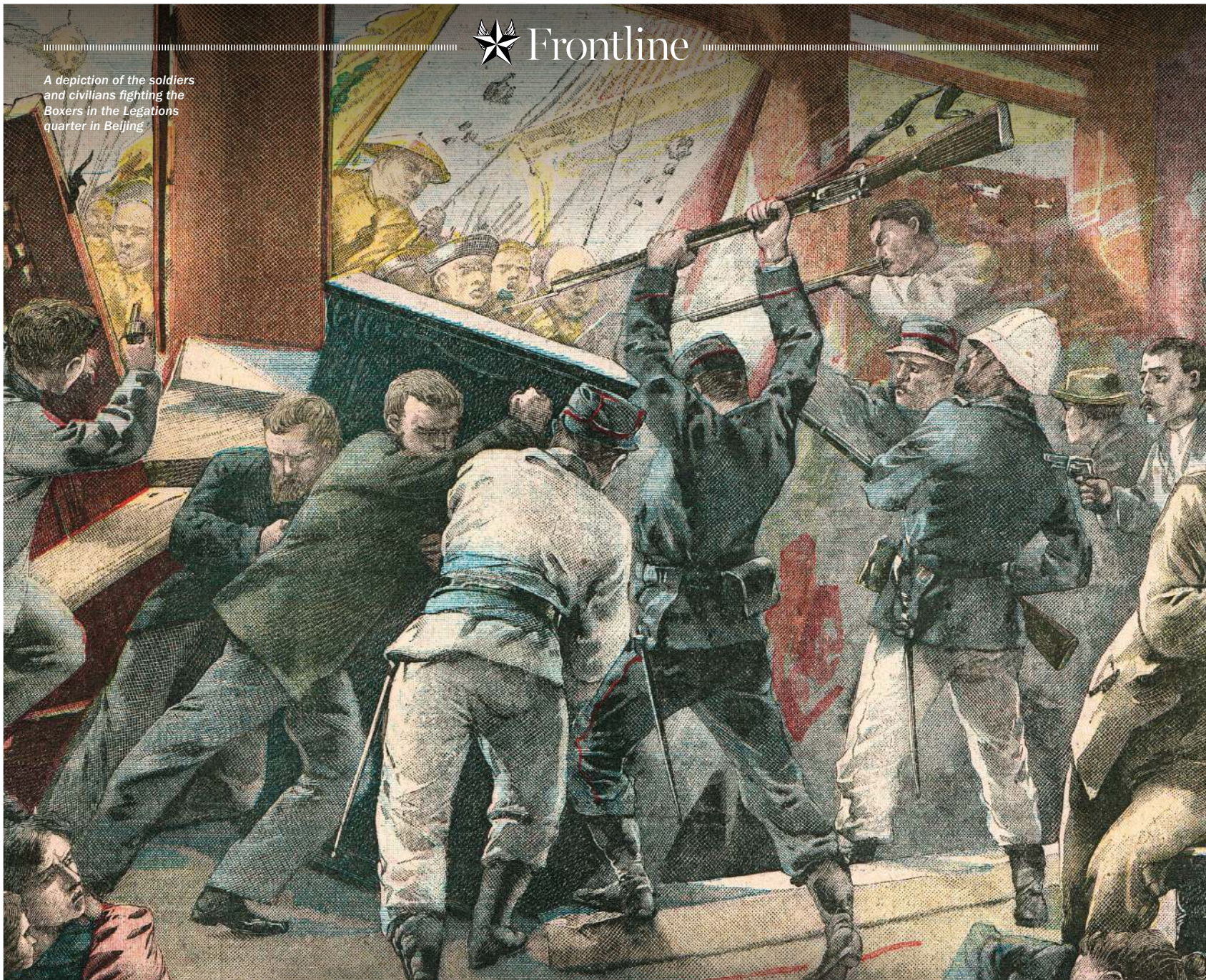


Image: Alamy



A depiction of the soldiers and civilians fighting the Boxers in the Legations quarter in Beijing.



# SIEGE OF BEIJING

In the summer of 1900 an international military force marched on Beijing, liberating Westerners and Chinese Christians under siege

Image: Alamy



**C**aptain John T. Myers of the US Marines surveyed the situation along the Tartar Wall enclosing the Legations quarter of Beijing, where 2,800 international civilians, diplomats, Chinese Christian converts and Western soldiers had taken refuge from the estimated 80,000-strong force of Boxers and elements of the Chinese army that were bent on their destruction.

"The men all feel they are in a trap and simply await the hour of execution," wrote Myers. The situation did indeed appear bleak. Sporadic combat inflicted casualties and sapped the strength of the British, American, Japanese, French, German, Italian, Austrian and Russian defenders. An international relief force under British Vice Admiral Edward Seymour had already been thwarted by stiff Chinese resistance and had turned back to the port of Tientsin with heavy casualties.

Rather than overwhelming the handful of Western troops that numbered no more than 900, the Boxers laid siege to the Legation district, an area only 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) long and 1.6 kilometres (1 mile) wide. Another band of refugees was marooned at Beitang 4.8 kilometres (three miles) away, where 43 French and Italian soldiers, 33 priests and nuns and about 3,000 Chinese converts had sought refuge in the Catholic church.

The Siege of the International Legations had begun on 20 June 1900, and British minister Sir Charles MacDonal had taken command of the Western forces with American diplomat Herbert Squiers as his deputy. Ronglu, the Chinese commander, actually opposed the Boxer movement, which possibly explained his reluctance to mount an overwhelming assault. Nevertheless, the situation within the Legation district became more desperate with each passing day. Boxers initially tried to burn the defenders out. Then they attacked the Fu, a large palace that dominated the area, but were thrown back by Japanese marines.

The Germans were driven from the Tartar Wall on 30 June, leaving the Americans temporarily alone. Reinforced, Captain Myers led 26 British, 15 American and 15 Russian soldiers in a night attack that surprised the Chinese, ejected them from the wall and saved the Westerners from annihilation.

On 4 August a powerful Western force known as the Eight-Nation Alliance marched from Tientsin. General Sir Alfred Gaselee led

its 3,000 British Commonwealth soldiers and was nominally in charge of the entire 20,000-man army. The route to Beijing stretched 160 kilometres (100 miles) through hostile countryside. Searing heat took its toll, and many soldiers were incapacitated or died of heat exhaustion.

A day after its march began, the Western army defeated the Chinese at Beicang, and on 6 August the Chinese were again defeated at Yangcun. A week later the relief force arrived outside Beijing. British, American, Russian and Japanese contingents were each ordered to assault one of the city gates, and early on 14 August Russian cannon tore open the Tung Pein gate, which was actually assigned to the Americans. 30 Chinese were dead, and the Russians lost 26 killed and over 100 wounded in the ensuing melee, which lasted several hours. The Japanese also met stiff resistance. Meanwhile, the Americans moved roughly 200 metres (655 feet) south of their assigned gate and scaled the city's nine-metre (30-foot) outer wall, entering Beijing and moving towards the Legation district.

The British found their assigned gate virtually undefended and waded through a canal to reach the Legations quarter. As they raised the 55-day siege at 2.30pm, the British were warmly welcomed by the rescued civilians, many of them donning their best clothes to greet their liberators. The Americans fought their way to the district, arriving two hours later. Remnants of the Boxer force still controlled parts of Beijing but were driven off the next day. The Americans lost seven killed and 29 wounded in that engagement. Beitang was relieved on 16 August, and Dowager Empress Tz'u-Hsi and her ministers fled Beijing, taking refuge in the city of Xi'an.

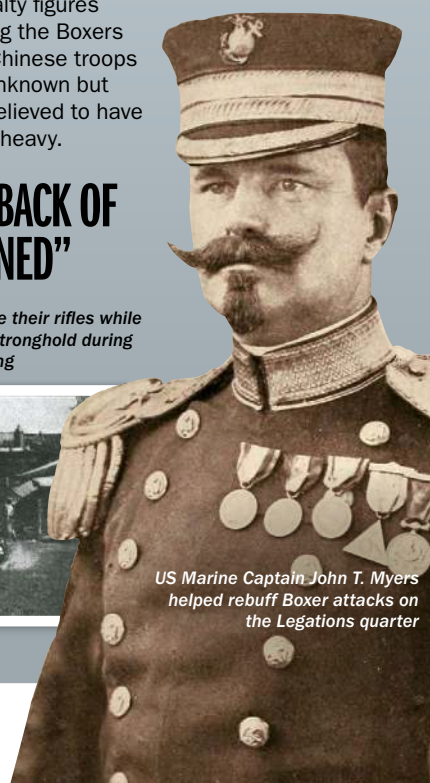
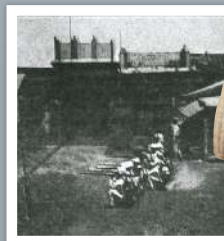
The battle for Beijing broke the back of the Boxers, and the movement waned. On 7 September 1901 the signing of the Peking (Beijing) Protocol formalised terms for keeping the peace. Raising the Siege of the International Legations cost the Eight-Nation Alliance 60 dead and over 200 wounded. 55 soldiers died and 135 were wounded as they held the district and awaited rescue. Dozens of civilians were killed or wounded, while exact casualty figures among the Boxers and Chinese troops are unknown but are believed to have been heavy.

## "THE BATTLE FOR BEIJING BROKE THE BACK OF THE BOXERS, AND THE MOVEMENT WANED"

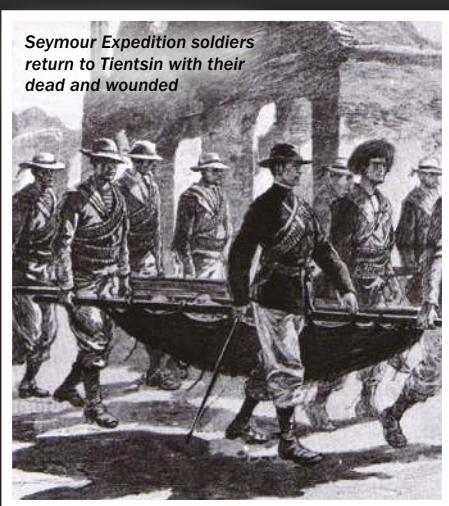
*Russian cannon blast a Beijing gate during the effort to drive the Boxers from the International Legations*



*Japanese troops fire their rifles while attacking a Boxer stronghold during the fighting in Beijing*



*US Marine Captain John T. Myers helped rebuff Boxer attacks on the Legations quarter*



*Seymour Expedition soldiers return to Tientsin with their dead and wounded*

## FAILURE OF THE SEYMOUR EXPEDITION

### CHINESE FORCES DEFEATED THE INITIAL ATTEMPT TO PROTECT WESTERN INTERESTS FROM THE MARAUDING BOXERS IN BEIJING

On 10 June 1900, more than a week before the Boxers laid siege to the Legations in Beijing, British Admiral Edward Seymour departed the port of Tientsin with 2,000 troops, including contingents from Britain, Japan, Germany, Russia, Italy, France, Austria and the United States. Their mission was to protect Western diplomats in the capital city along with civilians and sympathetic Chinese, including hundreds who had converted to Christianity, from the wrath of the Boxers. Moving by rail, the expedition was attacked twice on 14 June but continued to advance slowly.

Four days later at Langfang, south of Beijing, the Chinese attempted to trap the Western force. Although hundreds of Boxers and Chinese Muslim troops were killed, their fanaticism was disconcerting and Seymour ordered a general retirement to Tientsin. Following the course of the Hai River the Westerners were continually harassed. Casualties mounted, ammunition was low and food and water supplies were depleted.

On 23 June the beleaguered Seymour Expedition luckily found supplies at the abandoned Xigu fort, and a messenger reached Tientsin with an urgent request for support. Within hours, 2,000 Western troops were en route to Xigu. On the 26 June Seymour's ill-fated expedition, with 62 dead and 232 wounded, limped back into the city under escort.

## "ALTHOUGH HUNDREDS OF BOXERS AND CHINESE MUSLIM TROOPS WERE KILLED, THEIR FANATICISM WAS DISCONCERTING AND SEYMOUR ORDERED A GENERAL RETIREMENT TO TIENTSIN"



# THE EIGHT-NATION ALLIANCE

Western powers and Japan joined forces to rescue the besieged legations in Beijing and quell the Boxer Rebellion



Left: Men of the Seventh Rajputs, British Indian Army, outside the Temple of Heaven, Beijing

## 1 BRITISH EMPIRE

1899-1901

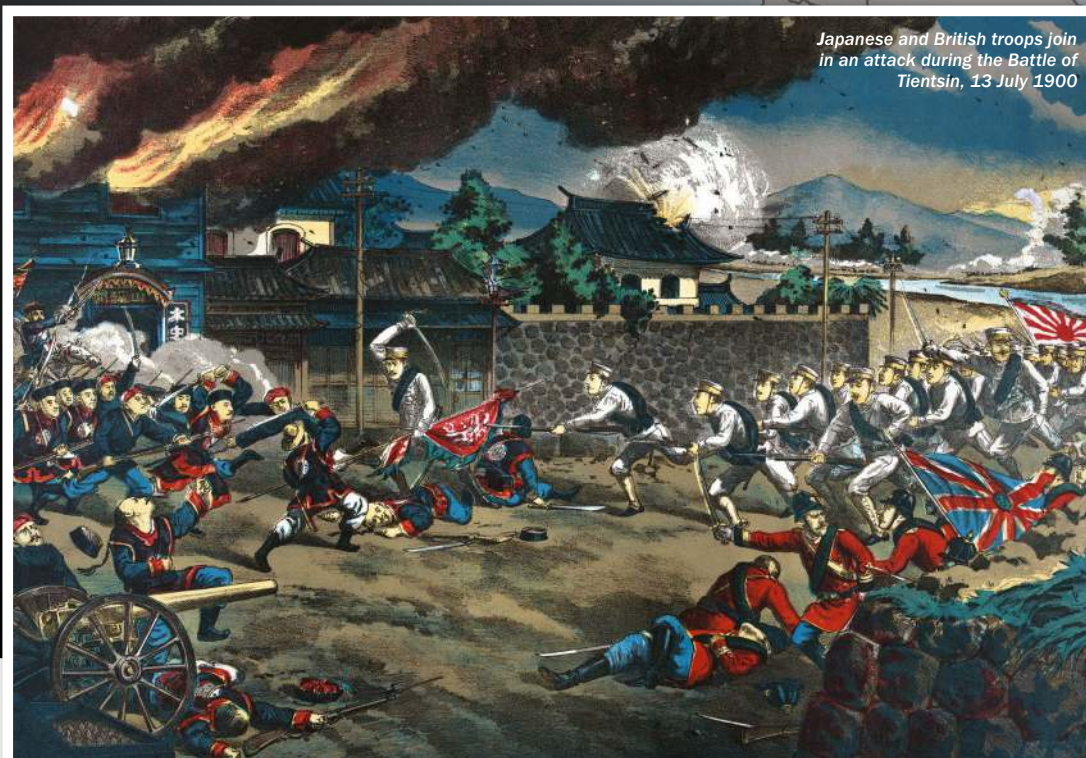
Britain committed troops and naval assets to the suppression of the Boxers in order to protect British lives and property in China. Britain also wanted to maintain the hard-won trade concessions of the earlier Opium Wars that resulted in profitable trade.

## 2 JAPAN

1899-1901

Japan had soundly defeated the Chinese in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and sought to extend Japanese hegemony on the Asian continent after successfully gaining control of the Korean Peninsula. Japan contributed the largest contingent of troops – more than 20,000 – to the Eight-Nation Alliance.

“JAPAN CONTRIBUTED THE LARGEST CONTINGENT OF TROOPS – MORE THAN 20,000 – TO THE EIGHT-NATION ALLIANCE”



Japanese and British troops join in an attack during the Battle of Tientsin, 13 July 1900

## 3 FRANCE

1899-1901

France committed over 3,000 troops to the Eight-Nation Alliance and protected its diplomatic mission and trade interests during the Boxer Rebellion.

## 4 GERMANY

1899-1901

Seeking a wider empire and greater international influence, Germany expanded its presence in Asia during the Boxer Rebellion.





## 8 RUSSIA

1899-1901

Imperial Russia, a major Eastern European power with interests in Asia, wrested control of Manchuria, a province rich in natural resources, from China during the course of the Boxer Rebellion. The Russians also strengthened other territorial claims and protected its trade interests.

*Left: Russian marines fight off a Boxer attack during the effort to raise the Siege of the International Legations in Beijing*

**“AUSTRIA-HUNGARY MAINTAINED MILITARY FORCES IN BEIJING AND A NAVAL PRESENCE ALONG CHINA’S COAST”**



## 7 AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

1899-1901

While extending commercial opportunities, Austria-Hungary maintained military forces in Beijing and a naval presence along China's coast after the Boxer Rebellion.

*Right: US Signal Corps soldiers who formed part of the Eight-Nation Alliance pose for a photograph during the Boxer Rebellion*

## 5 UNITED STATES

1899-1901

An early advocate of opening Asia to trade with Europe and North America, the United States sought to protect its citizens and commercial interests in China, committing more than 3,000 troops to the suppression of the Boxers. A total of 53 American soldiers were killed and 253 wounded during the Boxer Rebellion.

## 6 ITALY

1899-1901

Italy committed 2,500 soldiers to the Eight-Nation Alliance and gained trade concessions around the port city of Tientsin.



*Images: Alamy, Getty*



# HEROES & LEADERS

Notable figures emerged in battle, in the church and in the halls of government during months of cultural strife and armed conflict

## XU JINGCHENG 1845-1900 CHINA

Xu Jingcheng was a major political figure and served as a diplomatic envoy to several European countries during a political career that spanned more than three decades. He was a key advocate of modernisation in China and supported the Hundred Days' Reforms, which resulted in improvements in infrastructure such as railways and other public works.

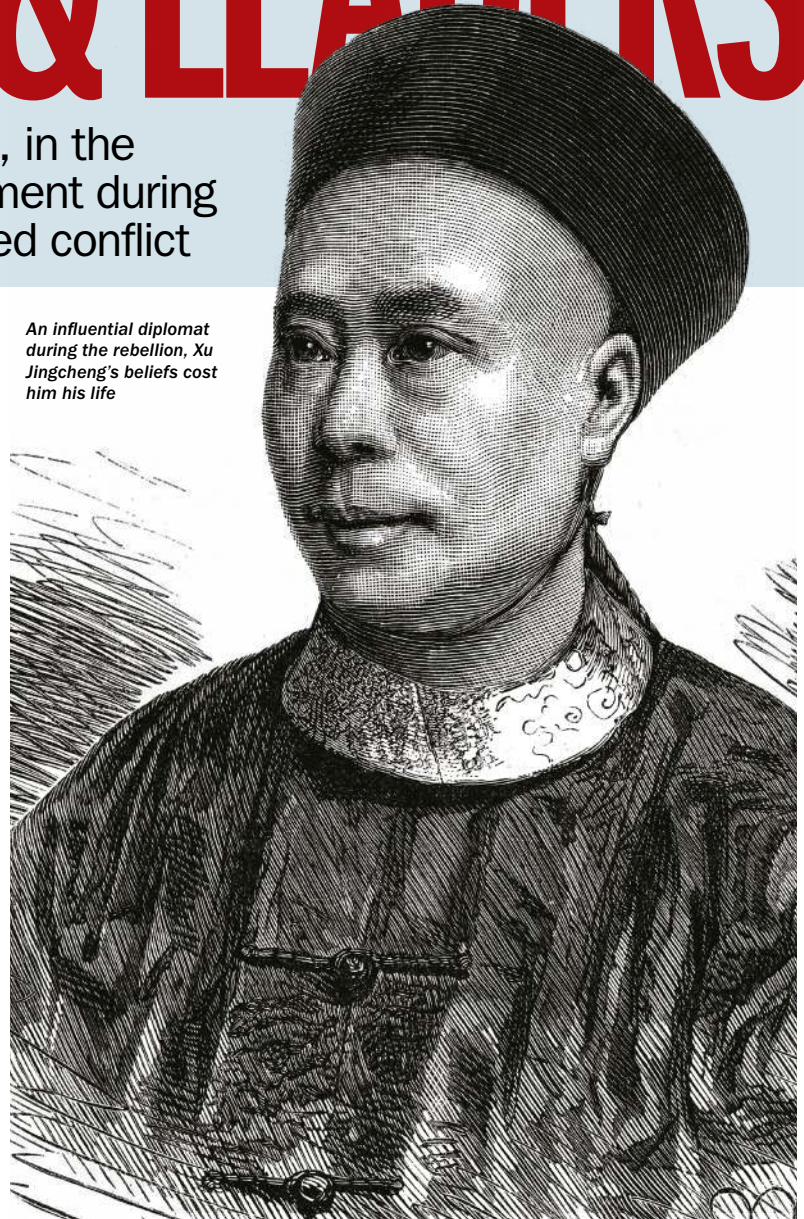
As a young diplomat Xu gained an understanding of European industrialisation during the late 19th century and authored an encyclopaedia of foreign ships and naval vessels, while advocating the modernisation of the Qing government's navy. In 1890 he returned to Beijing and rose to a post among the top six ministers of the Chinese government.

Sometime during his diplomatic sojourn, Xu converted to Roman Catholicism. As the Boxer Rebellion took shape at the turn of the 20th century he spoke openly against the violence and breaches of international law that he realised would bring retribution from Western powers. His Christian faith made Xu a target of suspicion and ridicule among the Boxers, as well as those in the Qing government who supported them.

As the unrest of the Boxer Rebellion spread to Beijing from the northern Shandong Province, Xu was one of six liberal members of the court that issued a petition to Dowager Empress Tz'u-Hzi seeking a diplomatic solution to the uprising and opposing any further support for the Boxers. The empress was enraged by its language and decreed that Xu and the other ministers should be put to death for "building subversive thought" and "wilfully and absurdly petitioning the imperial court".

Xu was beheaded on 28 July 1900 at the Caishikou Execution Grounds in Beijing, and his severed head was displayed as a warning to others. His protégé, Lou Tseng-Tsiang, later served as a diplomat and became a Catholic priest and missionary as well as Chinese prime minister.

*An influential diplomat during the rebellion, Xu Jingcheng's beliefs cost him his life*



*Left: Dong Fuxiang commanded the Kansu Braves during the Boxer Rebellion and gained lasting fame in China*

## DONG FUXIANG 1839-1908 CHINESE QING DYNASTY

One of the most highly respected military units among the enemies of the Eight-Nation Alliance during the Boxer Rebellion was known as the Kansu Braves, Chinese Hui Muslim soldiers who were led by the non-Muslim General Dong Fuxiang. Dong was born in western Gansu Province in 1839. He joined the Qing army, rising rapidly

through the ranks and successfully leading his Muslim troops in suppressing the Dungan Revolt in 1895. Vehemently anti-foreign in his beliefs, he led 10,000 soldiers to Beijing three years later in preparation for war against Westerners in support of the Boxer Rebellion.

As the Qing court escaped from the embattled Beijing, Dong's soldiers provided an escort to the city of Xi'an. Although he became a national hero in China, Dong was exiled to Gansu after the Boxer Rebellion failed. He died in 1908 at the age of 69.

**"HE JOINED THE QING ARMY, RISING RAPIDLY THROUGH THE RANKS AND SUCCESSFULLY LEADING HIS MUSLIM TROOPS IN SUPPRESSING THE DUNGAN REVOLT IN 1895"**

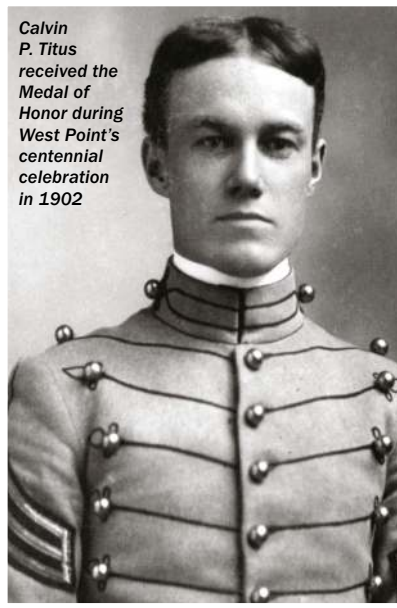


## CORPORAL CALVIN P. TITUS 1879-1966 UNITED STATES

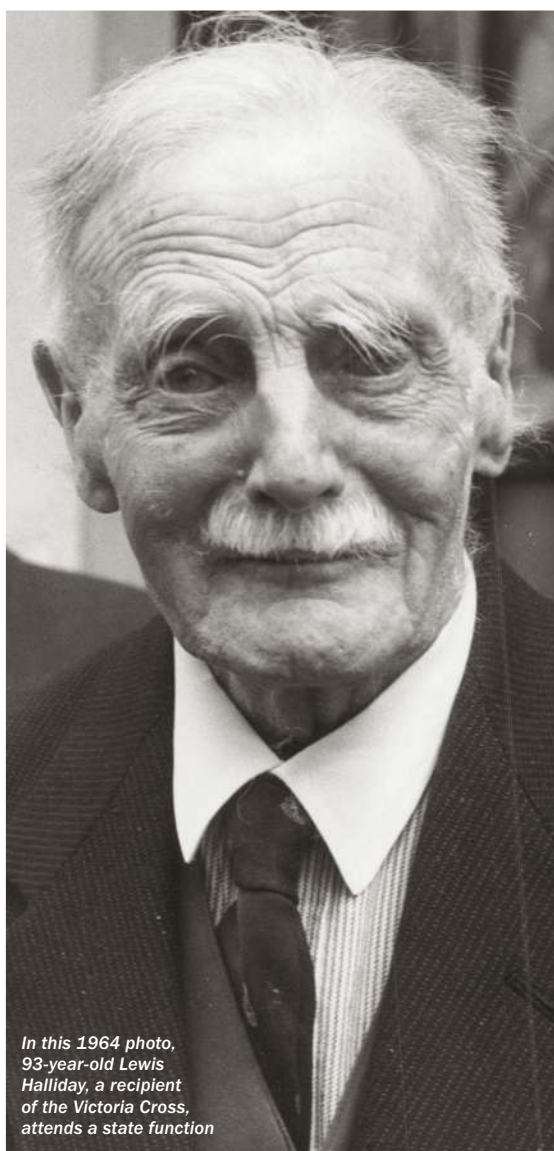
On 14 August 1900 the 14th Infantry Regiment of the US Army was hotly engaged with Boxers along the outer wall of the Chinese capital of Beijing. With his command pinned down at the Tung-Pien Gate, Colonel Aaron Daggett asked for volunteers to scale the adjacent nine-metre (30-foot) wall and lay down suppressing fire.

19-year-old Corporal Calvin P. Titus of Oklahoma stepped forward and said, "I'll try, sir!" While others gasped, Titus, who went on to graduate from the US Military Academy at West Point in 1905 and later became a chaplain assistant and ordained minister, used the cracks and jagged edges of the bricks to work his way upwards and was the first to reach the top. Others followed. Titus later received the Medal of Honor from President Theodore Roosevelt. He retired from the US Army with the rank of lieutenant colonel after 32 years of service and died at the age of 86 on 27 May 1966.

Calvin P. Titus received the Medal of Honor during West Point's centennial celebration in 1902



## CAPTAIN LEWIS HALLIDAY 1870-1966 BRITISH EMPIRE



In this 1964 photo, 93-year-old Lewis Halliday, a recipient of the Victoria Cross, attends a state function

When the British Legation in Beijing was assaulted by marauding Boxers on 24 June 1900 and several buildings were set ablaze, 30-year-old Captain Halliday led 20 Royal Marines in an attempt to drive the attackers back. Opening a hole in the Legation wall, Halliday's command met heavy enemy fire. Halliday killed four Boxers but was severely wounded, a bullet tearing through his shoulder. Unable to move forward, he ordered the marines to continue the advance. Alone, he walked back to an aid station.

Halliday received the Victoria Cross and was promoted to brevet major. He recovered from his wound and continued in the service, attaining the rank of general and holding the post of adjutant general Royal Marines from 1927 until his retirement in 1930. He was also appointed knight commander of the Order of the Bath. Halliday died at the age of 95 in Dorking, Surrey, on 9 March 1966.

**"HALLIDAY KILLED FOUR BOXERS BUT WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED, A BULLET TEARING THROUGH HIS SHOULDER. UNABLE TO MOVE FORWARD, HE ORDERED THE MARINES TO CONTINUE THE ADVANCE"**

## QIU JIN 1875-1907 CHINA

An acclaimed heroine of the Chinese people, Qiu Jin was a poet, feminist and revolutionary whose perspective on the future of China and the role of women in the country was partially shaped by the events of the Boxer Rebellion. Born in Xiamen in 1875, she grew to advocate the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and wrote poetry referencing the anti-Western uprising and the future of China.

In 1903 Qiu became a resident of Beijing and later that year she left her husband and two children to study in Japan. The profound effect of the Boxer Rebellion and continuing unrest in China motivated her to oppose many of the country's ancient customs that denigrated women. In 1905 she joined the Triads, a secret society committed to revolution. She subsequently became principal of the Datong School in Shaoxing, where revolutionaries were regularly trained. In July 1907 she was arrested, tortured and then beheaded at the age of 31.

Revolutionary poet Qiu Jin is revered in China and memorialised in a museum in Shaoxing





# IN THE RANKS

The Western powers sent a diverse array of troops to confront the Boxers alongside elements of the Qing army

**T**he opening shots of the Boxer Rebellion caused alarm within the Western diplomatic legations and among the Chinese Christian population in the north of China. Calls for their protection brought the multi-national forces of the Eight-Nation Alliance to raise the siege in Beijing and defeat the militant Boxers and elements of the Qing army.

*Left: Armed with traditional swords, Qing soldiers were also trained with firearms*

## QING ARMY

FOLLOWING A SHATTERING DEFEAT IN THE FIRST SINO-JAPANESE WAR, THE QING GOVERNMENT BEGAN A MODERNISATION OF ITS ARMY

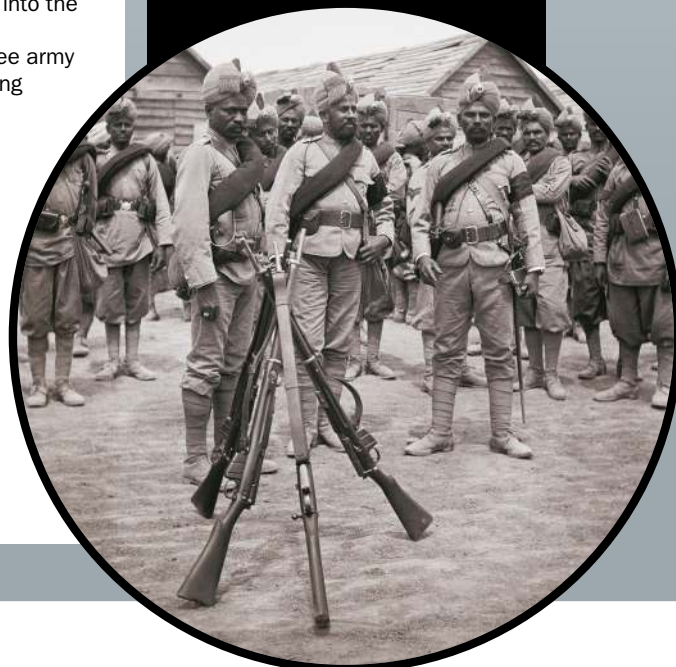
The defeat of the Qing army and emergence of Japan as the first global power in Asia raised concerns at the Qing court in Beijing and served as a catalyst to update and improve the Chinese land forces. While the first wave of violence of the Boxer Rebellion rippled, the Qing army was in the midst of modernisation. The training of soldiers, mostly peasants from rural areas, became more refined and intense. The soldiers themselves were armed with modern German Mauser shoulder arms, as well as Winchester and Mannlicher German artillery, manufactured by the renowned Krupp armament works, also made its way into the ranks of the Qing army.

Perhaps the most proficient of three army groups stationed around Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion was the 'Newly Created Army' under Yuan Shikai. Unlike other elements of the Qing army, Yuan fought against the Boxers in Shandong Province and refused to attack the soldiers of the Eight-Nation Alliance when they advanced towards the capital city. At its peak strength during the Boxer Rebellion, the Newly Created Army was 7,000 strong. Nevertheless, widespread support for the Boxers resulted in their acquisition of some modern weapons and instruction in military tactics from the Qing army.

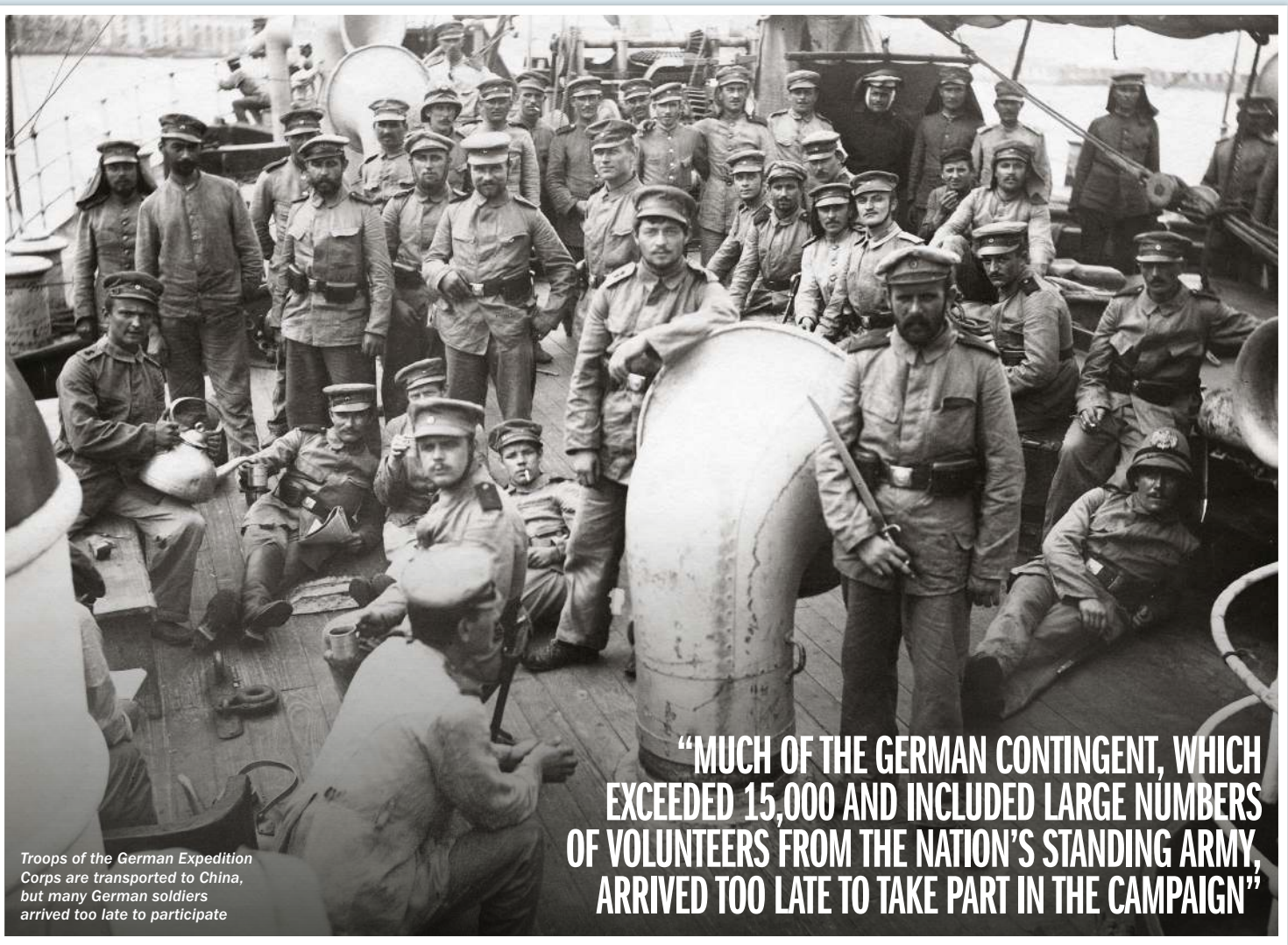
## FIRST SIKH INFANTRY FORMED IN 1846, THIS COMMONWEALTH REGIMENT WAS HIGHLY EXPERIENCED AND RESPECTED AT THE TIME OF THE BOXER REBELLION

Among the Western powers that suppressed the Boxer Rebellion, one of the greatest commitment of troops was made by Britain, and much of its fighting force consisted of Commonwealth soldiers from the Indian subcontinent. Typically armed with breech-loading Lee Enfield rifles, the Sikhs were otherwise uniformed as troops of the British Army and fought under the command of British officers. Sikh troops were often employed as law enforcement personnel. It was reported that the Chinese, intimidated by their mere presence, showed the Sikh soldiers great respect.

*Below: Sikh Troops of the British Indian Army, part of the relief force sent to China*







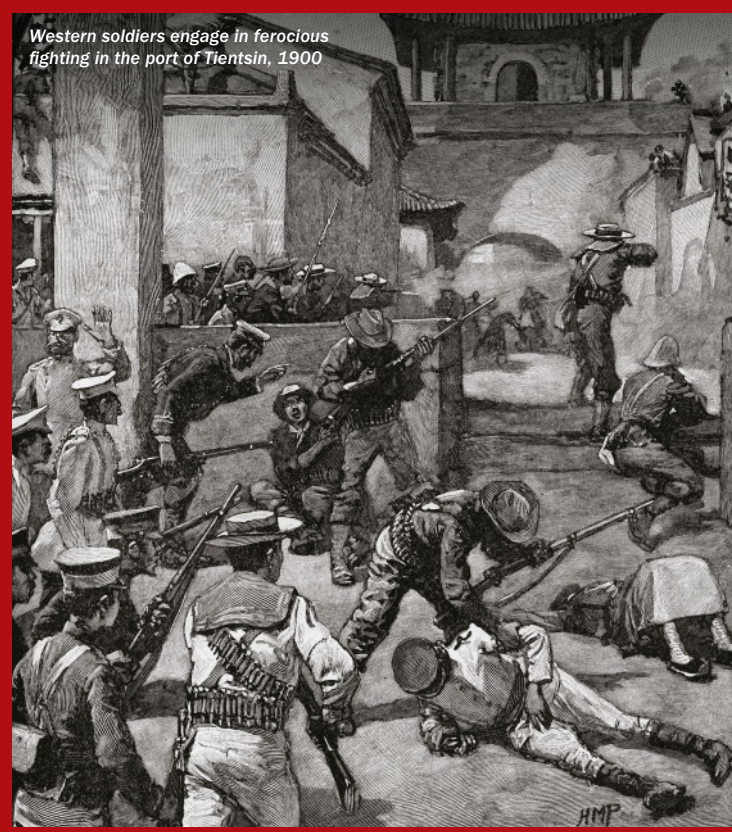
Troops of the German Expedition Corps are transported to China, but many German soldiers arrived too late to participate

**“MUCH OF THE GERMAN CONTINGENT, WHICH EXCEEDED 15,000 AND INCLUDED LARGE NUMBERS OF VOLUNTEERS FROM THE NATION’S STANDING ARMY, ARRIVED TOO LATE TO TAKE PART IN THE CAMPAIGN”**

## **NINTH INFANTRY REGIMENT, UNITED STATES**

THE REGIMENT DISTINGUISHED ITSELF DURING FIERCE FIGHTING AGAINST THE BOXERS IN THE PORT CITY OF TIENTSIN

Three soldiers of the Ninth Infantry Regiment received the Medal of Honor for heroism at the Battle of Tientsin, 13-14 July 1900. Among them was the regimental commander, Colonel Emerson H. Liscum, who was killed by a Chinese sniper after attempting to take the national colours from a wounded bearer. Liscum’s last words, “Keep up the fire!” became the regiment’s motto. American troops during the Boxer Rebellion wore distinctive dark blue uniforms and were armed with Krag-Jorgensen rifles.



Western soldiers engage in ferocious fighting in the port of Tientsin, 1900

## **GERMAN EXPEDITION CORPS**

THE GERMAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN CHINA WAS BOLSTERED AFTER THE JUYE INCIDENT, WHICH SAW THE MURDER OF TWO GERMAN CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN NOVEMBER 1897

The first German military units that reinforced the International Legation defences in Beijing, and joined the relief expedition to the capital, were elements of three Seebataillons – naval personnel trained to fight on land. Additional troops of the East Asian Expeditionary Corps followed, but much of the German contingent, which exceeded 15,000 and included large numbers of volunteers from the nation’s standing army, arrived too late to take part in the campaign. Many of the Germans, armed with the superb Mauser rifle, served as garrison troops.

Images: Getty





The Light Horse have a special place in Australian history, and 2017 has seen them particularly feted for their role in the Battle of Beersheba

# CHARGE — OF THE — LIGHT HORSE

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

**T**he Australian Light Horse formed at the outbreak of World War I as part of the Australian Imperial Force destined to fight in Europe. The majority of the light horsemen came from the vast, hot and arid rural regions in Australia. Horsemanship, and often marksmanship, was learned from childhood and was for many an essential skill for their daily lives and work.

Two of the country's official historians, Charles Bean and Henry Gullett, enthused about the light horsemen, one describing them as, "the romantic, quixotic, adventurous flotsam that eddied on the surface of the Australian people". The other noted that nearly all were of British descent and were "the children of the most restless, adventurous and virile individuals of that stock". Even allowing for the tendency of nations to romanticise their World War I soldiers, the light horsemen were spirited, hardened and usually young men with a dashing reputation. With a leavening of Boer War veterans, they had the makings of formidable troops.

Their baptism of fire came at Gallipoli. After training in Egypt, they were committed in May 1915 as reinforcements to the landings that were meant to open the way to Constantinople and knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war. Instead, the light horse faced seven months of hard service in squalid trenches under appalling conditions, fighting several costly actions – most famously the attack on 'The Nek' on 7 August 1915 (see page 32).





Australian lighthorsemen  
rescue their mates  
during a tactical retreat  
during the Battle of  
Romani, August 1916

**“EVEN ALLOWING FOR THE TENDENCY OF NATIONS TO ROMANTICISE THEIR WORLD WAR I SOLDIERS, THE LIGHT HORSEMEN WERE SPIRITED, HARDENED AND USUALLY YOUNG MEN WITH A DASHING REPUTATION”**







A halt in the desert for the Australian Light Horse taken by Capt. F. Hurley



As the campaign ended, they were withdrawn to Egypt to be joyously reunited with their horses. The light horsemen prized their mounts: many had brought their own horses with them when joining up. The bonds were close, and these relationships would be the source of comfort and dismay in the years ahead as both riders and mounts suffered in a variety of inhospitable environments.

While the Australian infantry were sent to France after Gallipoli, the three light horse brigades joined the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF). Their task was to defend the Suez Canal, the vital strategic waterway linking the raw resources of the east with Britain's factories.

This was important work and vital to the war effort. The Ottomans had tried to cut the canal in February 1915 and would doubtless try again, but for the men and animals spending weary, monotonous months in desert outposts the task slowly dulled their spirits. Some light horsemen attempted to get to France where the 'real' war was, but those who stayed would soon find all the action they could wish for.

**"THE LIGHT HORSEMEN PRIZED THEIR MOUNTS: MANY HAD BROUGHT THEIR OWN HORSES WITH THEM WHEN JOINING UP"**

### Sinai Desert

In April 1916 the Ottomans again attacked the Suez Canal. After their defeat, the Australian Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles (NZMR) led the EEF into the desert. The British dug in around Romani, while a railway and pipeline were slowly built eastwards to keep them supplied. From here, two brigades of light horse and NZMR patrolled deeply and aggressively into the desert, where a much larger Ottoman force was gathering for a third attempt on the Suez Canal.

The Australians were already partially conditioned to the environment and proved adept at this small war of scouting, skirmishing and ambushing. They maintained a punishing routine, with each brigade spending a long day out on patrol, followed by a day on picket duty in the sand dunes south of Romani. With precious little rest between duties, strictly limited water and the burning Sinai summer, it was relentless work under the most difficult of conditions.

The Ottoman attack on Romani on 3 August 1916 ran straight into a carefully prepared British trap. The Australians held a picket line with no prepared positions or barbed wire that might warn the enemy of their presence, and when the Ottomans stumbled into them they conducted a fighting retreat at night while in close contact with vastly superior numbers. The Australians had earned a wild and disorderly reputation in

Egypt, but their performance that night was an incredible display of disciplined fighting efficiency. Although confusion was inevitable, control was never lost and the retreat was a complete success as it drew the enemy in. Having fought all night, the Australians (and New Zealanders) then held a new line through the day, before a counterattack of British and New Zealand mounted troops swept in on the Ottomans' exposed flank.

The EEF pushed the Ottomans back across the Sinai, with the mounted troops leading the way. At the end of the year the Australian Light Horse, British Yeomanry, NZMR and Imperial Camel Corps (ICC) mounted large-scale raids against the last

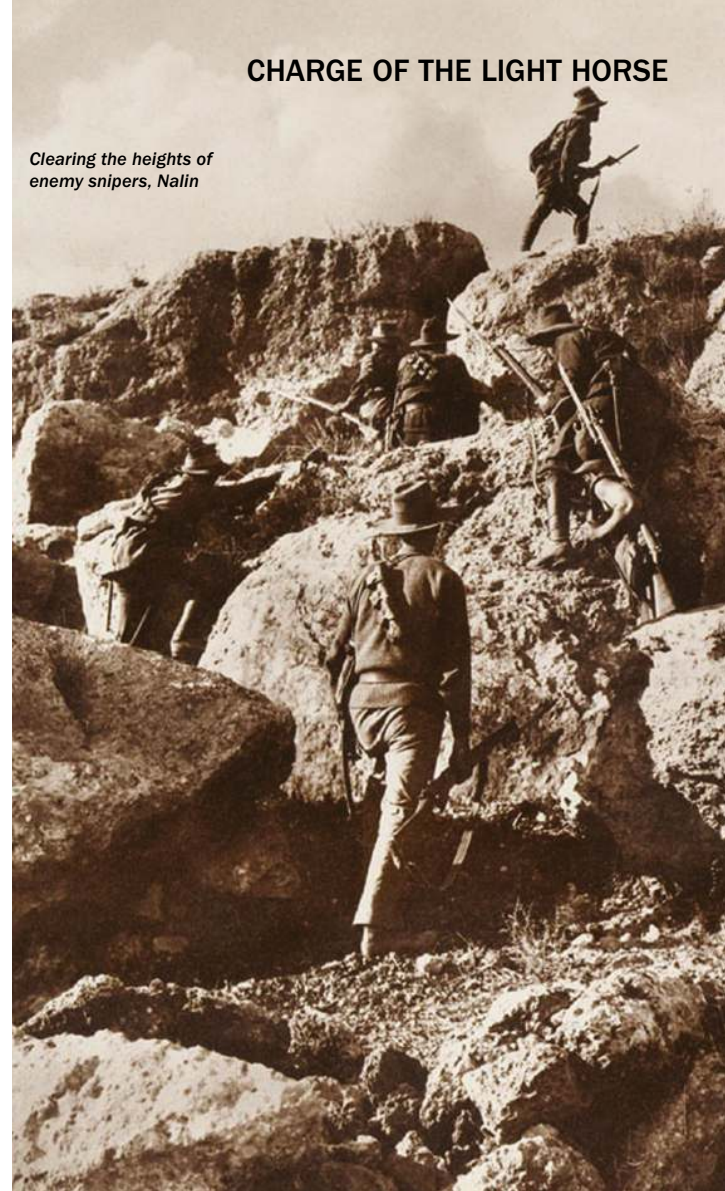
An Australian light horseman in Palestine





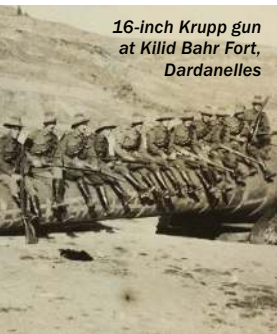


Australian Light Horse on the move across the desert



**CHARGE OF THE LIGHT HORSE**

Clearing the heights of enemy snipers, Nalin



16-inch Krupp gun at Kilid Bahr Fort, Dardanelles



Light horsemen with a captured enemy artillery gun in the Wady Shunet Nimrin, Jordan



Australian Light Horse watering in the desert

two major Ottoman garrisons in the Sinai, at El Maghaba and El Magruntein.

These two actions showed both the strengths and weaknesses of the mounted troops. The mobility allowed them to strike at night with complete surprise, but their lack of numbers made breaking through the enemy's defences difficult. The horses also provided a major time constraint: they could only go so long without water. Operations had to succeed within a very set timeline. In both raids orders were actually issued to break off the attack just before the final success was achieved. At El Maghaba Lieutenant Colonel Charles Cox, commanding First Light Horse Brigade, thrust the order back at the messenger, declaring, "Take that

**"WITH PRECIOUS LITTLE REST BETWEEN DUTIES, STRICTLY LIMITED WATER AND THE BURNING SINAI SUMMER, IT WAS RELENTLESS WORK UNDER THE MOST DIFFICULT OF CONDITIONS"**

damned thing away, and let me see it for the first time in half an hour." Within minutes, a bayonet charge by his brigade broke through the Ottoman lines. At El Magruntein it was the New Zealanders and the ICC who made the final charge before the withdrawal order could reach them.

**Gaza**

With the Sinai secure, several months were spent on the border with Palestine patrolling and building up logistics. In March 1917 the advance was resumed, with Gaza the next objective.

The first attempt on the town on 26-27 March 1917 was a fiasco. Poor planning and communications doomed the attack, and although the objectives were taken at the end of the day, the weary troops were immediately ordered to withdraw from them. The British mounted divisions had spent the day screening

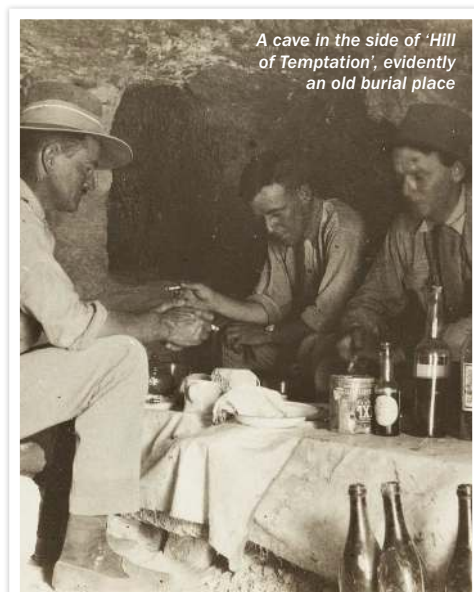
Gaza to the north and east, but in the afternoon the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division had been ordered to attack the city from the north. They swept into the town, but spread out in an urban environment with night falling and Ottoman reinforcements arriving, they were ordered to retreat before they were cut off and overwhelmed.

The Second Battle of Gaza in April also ended in failure. The EEF was better prepared, but so were the Ottomans. They were exceptional defensive soldiers and had dug in deeper and over a wider area, and the infantry attacks failed to penetrate. The mounted troops were on the eastern flank, pinning down Ottoman forces and blocking any counterattacks from Beersheba.

The EEF now settled down to a summer on the Gaza-Beersheba line. For the mounted troops this meant holding outposts on the desert flank and a return to the cat-and-mouse games of patrolling and raiding, ambushing and skirmishing that they had played the previous summer. Only in October 1917, reinforced and with General Sir Edmund Allenby installed as the new commander, did the EEF make a third attempt to break into Palestine.

**Glory at Beersheba**

Instead of attacking the enemy's main strength at Gaza, the initial objective was to be Beersheba at the eastern end of the line. From here, the Ottoman line could be cut off from



A cave in the side of 'Hill of Temptation', evidently an old burial place

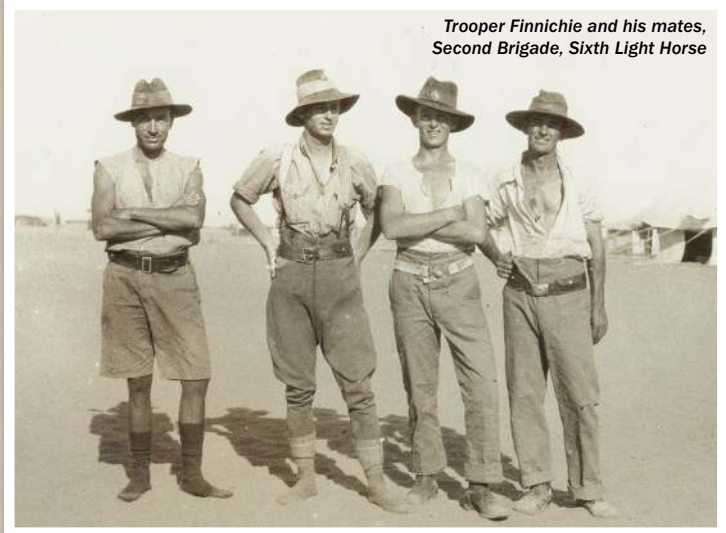




The First Brigade, Australian Light Horse, passing through Bethlehem on its way to Jericho



Trooper Finniche and his mates, Second Brigade, Sixth Light Horse



behind and rolled up from the flank. But taking Beersheba on the first day was crucial. Despite incredible efforts to develop water sources on the desert flank, such a large force – consisting of the infantry of XX Corps and the horsemen of the Desert Mounted Corps (DMC) – could only be sustained for a single day. Unless Beersheba and its large wells fell, the whole offensive might have to be called off.

The attack was launched on 31 October 1917 and progressed slowly due to the conditions and distances faced by the troops. The infantry of XX Corps attacked the Ottoman defences southwest of Gaza, while the DMC did the same from the southeast, and light

horsemen also cut the road to Hebron to the north. By 4pm the Ottomans were in retreat, leaving a rear guard holding off the pursuit south of Beersheba. However, it was imperative to get troops into the town to secure the wells before the Ottomans could demolish them. Speed was needed, and the closest mounted troops were the Fourth Light Horse Brigade.

The DMC's commander, General Harry Chauvel, called up the Australian Light Horse and ordered them to storm the town. At 4.40pm they formed up with Fourth Regiment on the right, 12th Regiment on the left and 11th Regiment behind as a reserve. The lines of light horsemen drew their bayonets to use

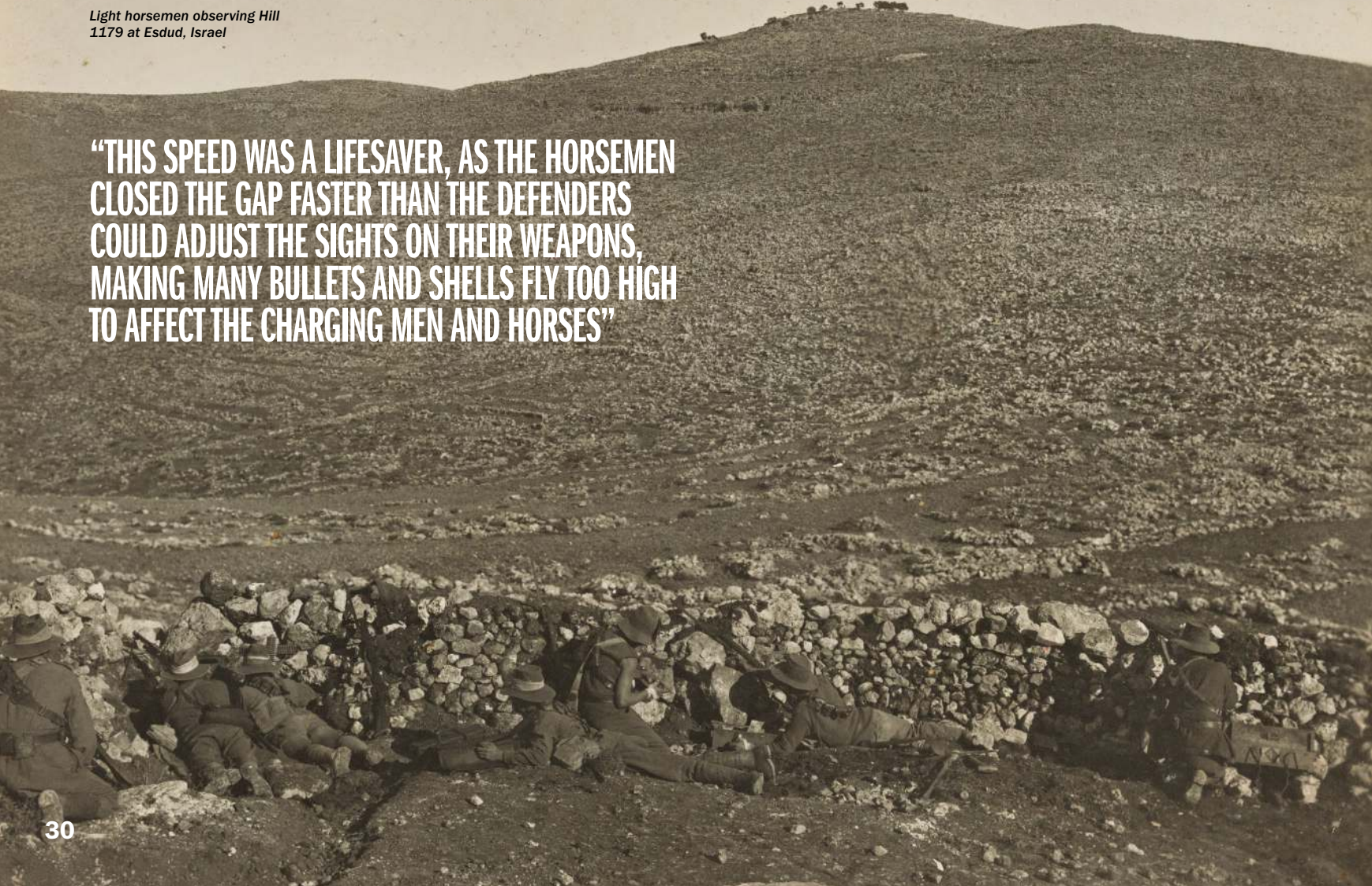
as swords and began their advance. Ahead of them 200 Ottoman infantry, supported by machine guns and field artillery, manned a crescent-shaped trench system, though without the added protection of barbed wire.

The light horsemen started slowly, keeping the formation tight for maximum impact, but steadily sped up until launching into a gallop over the last few hundred metres. This speed was a lifesaver, as the horsemen closed the gap faster than the defenders could adjust the sights on their weapons, making many bullets and shells fly too high to affect the charging men and horses.

Sergeant Charles Doherty, who charged with 12th ALH, described the moment: "As the

Light horsemen observing Hill 1179 at Esdud, Israel

**"THIS SPEED WAS A LIFESAVER, AS THE HORSEMEN CLOSED THE GAP FASTER THAN THE DEFENDERS COULD ADJUST THE SIGHTS ON THEIR WEAPONS, MAKING MANY BULLETS AND SHELLS FLY TOO HIGH TO AFFECT THE CHARGING MEN AND HORSES"**





A camp of Australian light horsemen among the sandhills, Belah



Australian Light Horse machine gunners in action among the Judeaan Hills



long line with the 12th... swung into position, the rattle from enemy musketry gradually increased... After progressing about three quarters of a mile [1.2 kilometres] our pace became terrific – we were galloping towards a strongly held, crescent shaped redoubt... In face of this intense fire, which now included frequent salvos from field artillery, the now maddened horses, straining their hearts to bursting point, had to cross cavernous wadies [ravines] whose precipitous banks seemed to defy our progress. The crescent redoubt – like a long, sinuous, smoking serpent – was taking a fearful toll of men and horses, but the line remained unwavering and resolute. As we neared the trenches that were belching forth death, horse and rider steeled themselves for the plunge over excavated pitfalls and through that tearing rain of lead.”

While the Fourth Regiment became embroiled in clearing the trenches, the majority of the 12th Regiment managed to sweep into the town. Taking the Ottomans by surprise, most of the wells and their machinery were seized intact. Other charges would be made in the campaign, no less dramatic and often against greater odds, but there were none upon which so much depended. Failure could have led to the entire offensive being called off and would have been another demoralising failure at what was already a very dark time of the war.

After the fall of Beersheba the EEF began an advance that would finish north of Jaffa and Jerusalem by the end of the year. The Australian Light Horse played a role in the advance, scouting ahead of the army and dislodging rear guards and later helping to blunt a major counterattack at Balin. It was

a punishing pace of operations, and it took a heavy toll on horses and men alike.

### 1918

In 1918 the light horsemen served in the heat and oppressive atmosphere of the Jordan Valley and took part in the two large-scale raids towards Es Salt and Amman. These both failed due to weather, terrain and unexpectedly tough Ottoman resistance. In September 1918 the EEF achieved another breakthrough, shattering the Ottoman armies in Palestine in the Battle of Megiddo. In the ensuing advance into Syria, the light horse regiments were often at the fore.

The pace of the advance left the infantry behind, and the mounted troops bore the brunt. Light horsemen rounded up thousands of prisoners as the enemy collapsed and shattered any pockets of resistance they encountered. They were the first to enter Damascus on 1 October 1918 but left again within hours to continue the pursuit. By the time the Ottoman Empire signed an armistice on 30 October 1918, the cavalry had advanced 500 kilometres (300 miles) in just six weeks, and the light horsemen had entered Australian legend.

**“AS WE NEARED THE TRENCHES THAT WERE BELCHING FORTH DEATH, HORSE AND RIDER STEELED THEMSELVES FOR THE PLUNGE OVER EXCAVATED PITFALLS AND THROUGH THAT TEARING RAIN OF LEAD”**

## CAVALRY OR INFANTRY?

THE LIGHT HORSE REGIMENTS WERE MOUNTED RIFLEMEN, ORGANISED AS CAVALRY BUT TRAINED TO FIGHT ON FOOT

In 1917 the EEF's mounted troops consisted of 16 regiments of British Yeomanry, 12 of Australian Light Horse, three of New Zealand Mounted Riflemen and three of Indian Lancers. Only the Indians were actual cavalry, and the rest were in fact mounted riflemen.

Mounted rifles were organised as cavalry but fought as infantry. Each regiment had three squadrons of around 150 men, broken into four troops, plus machine gun and signalling sections, to make a total of around 500 officers and men. However, although they rode into action, they would dismount to fight on foot, with one man in four holding the horses for the others. This gave the regiments a comparatively weak front line, but they made up for this limitation with mobility and surprise. Initially, only the British Yeomanry carried swords or were trained to use them, but in August 1918 they were issued to the other nationalities too. Despite being apparently out-dated on a modern battlefield, the nature of the war in Palestine was suited to such shock actions and several successful charges were made during the 1917 campaign.

Meanwhile, the Imperial Camel Corps were mounted infantry, and each battalion of about 770 men contained four companies, organised into platoons. The four battalions of ICC consisted of 18 companies, of which ten were drawn from the ranks of the Australian Light Horse.



Mounted riflemen, Yeomanry and Australian Light Horsemen: the primary mounted forces of the EEF



Light horsemen and Indian cavalry round up Ottoman prisoners in late 1918. Some of the Light horsemen carry their swords

**“ALTHOUGH THEY RODE INTO ACTION, THEY WOULD DISMOUNT TO FIGHT ON FOOT, WITH ONE MAN IN FOUR HOLDING THE HORSES”**





George Lambert's painting 'The charge of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915' depicts the carnage in the short gap between the Australian and Ottoman trenches as the Australians charge

# CHARGE AT THE NEK

## 'NOTHING BUT BLOODY MURDER'

Author, historian and battlefield guide **Stephen Chambers** explores how myth-making and nationalism have obscured the tragic truth behind this infamous but iconic battle





**T**he Battle of Beersheba on 31 October 1917, with its dramatic mounted charge of two Australian light horse regiments, has become a tool for national self-congratulation and myth-making in its centenary year. Australians should be rightfully proud of this momentous charge, but also cautious of media claims that their countrymen's role at Beersheba turned the tide of the Palestine campaign and that it was the last great cavalry charge in history. Both of these are somewhat outlandish claims but are nothing new – we heard similar for the anniversary of the Australian attack at Fromelles in 2016, airbrushing the British

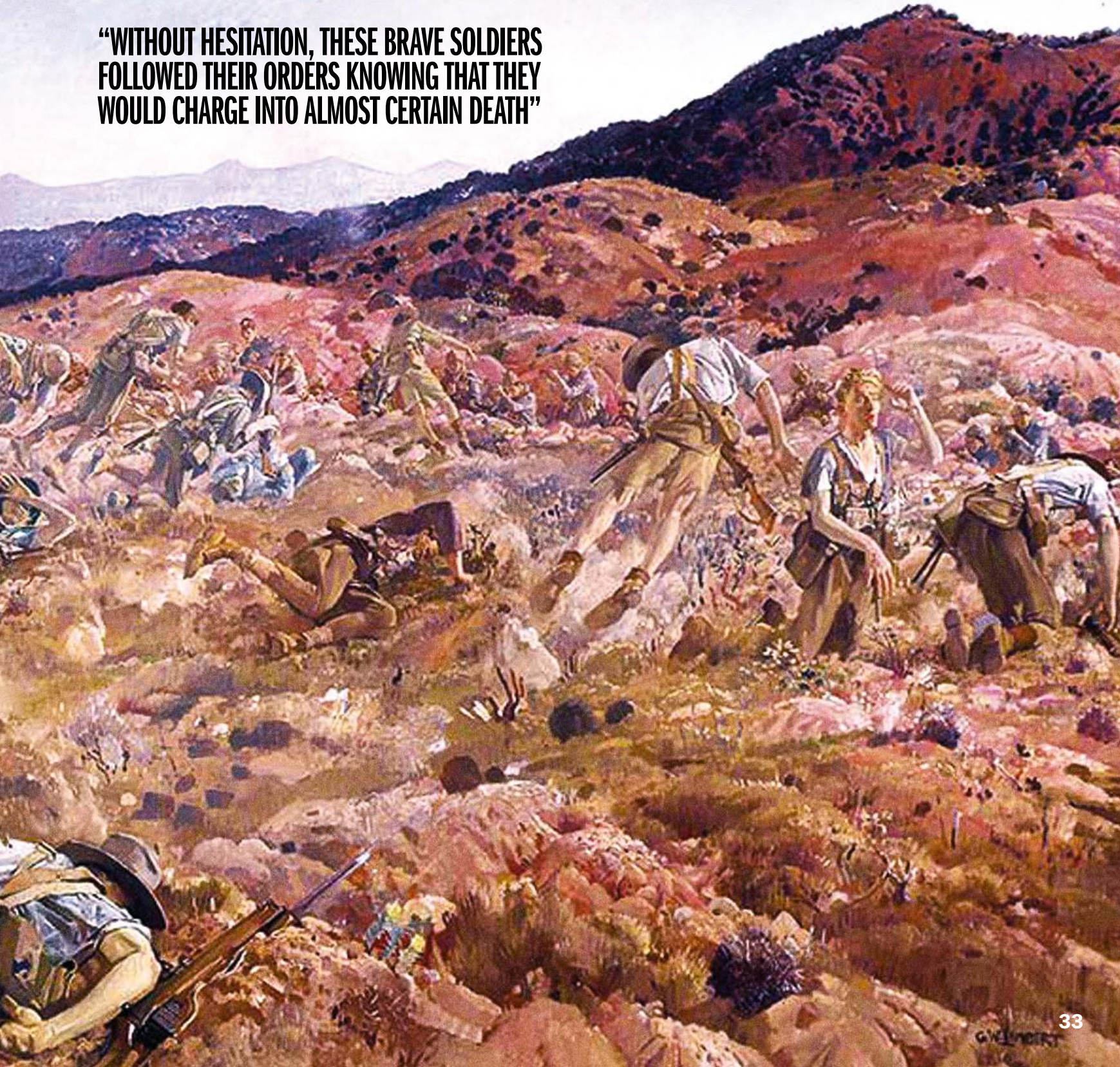
contribution completely, and earlier in 2015 during the Gallipoli centenary commemorations.

For historians, factual interpretation of any battle is key to its understanding. It is important to educate through historical analysis, not perpetuate myth through the popular media. However, there is one place where myth is greater than events, and that is Gallipoli. Few other places invoke the utter despair, futility and courage of war like this battlefield, and one event in particular is the tragic charge of the Australian Light Horse at The Nek on 7 August 1915. Looking into the collapsing Anzac trenches that still remain today, it is difficult to comprehend what it must have been like for the hundreds of frightened

young men who lined up in waves. Without hesitation, these brave soldiers followed their orders knowing that they would charge into almost certain death.

The Nek, a narrow bridge of land that stretched between 'Russell's Top' and 'Baby 700', was a vitally important position in the Anzac sector. It was a perfect bottleneck that was easy to defend. Several well-sited machine guns and rows of Turkish trenches that spread up onto the slopes of Baby 700 made this position all but impregnable. The Nek attack was just one part of the August Offensive, a series of assaults planned to break the deadlock at Gallipoli, where Australian, New Zealand, British and French troops had been

**“WITHOUT HESITATION, THESE BRAVE SOLDIERS FOLLOWED THEIR ORDERS KNOWING THAT THEY WOULD CHARGE INTO ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH”**







stalled since their landing in April 1915. The attack at The Nek was planned as a diversion in support of the New Zealand assault from Chunuk Bair, an objective that had to be captured during the night. While the Australians were to attack across The Nek to Baby 700, the New Zealanders would descend down from the heights above Baby 700, catching the Turks in a pincer movement.

The Third Australian Light Horse Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Frederic Godfrey Hughes, was chosen to assault The Nek. The brigade was made up of the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Light Horse Regiments, who had landed at Gallipoli in May 1915 as dismounted infantry, leaving their horses back in Egypt. Following a huge bombardment, the attack was due to commence at 4.30am, on 7 August 1915. The

frontage of the attack was 80 metres (262 feet) wide, which restricted each of the four waves to 150 men each. Each of these waves would advance two minutes apart to the first line of Turkish trenches only 27 metres (89 feet) away.

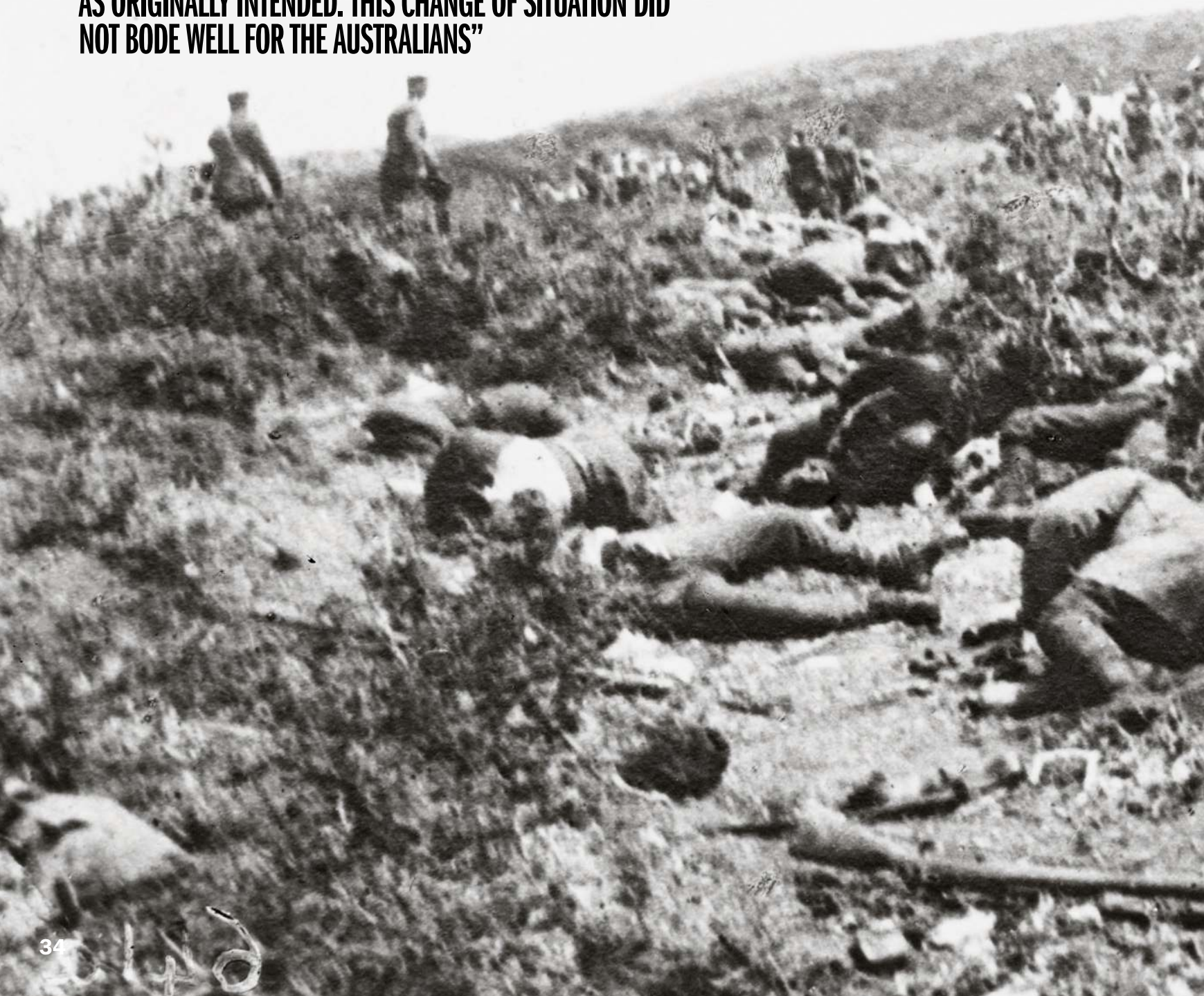
Unfortunately, it was clear on the morning of the attack that the preconditions for the assault had failed to occur: the New Zealander attack was held up, so Chunuk Bair had not been captured, and Turkish machine guns that flanked The Nek at a position named 'German Officers' Trench' had also not been captured during that night. Despite this, senior Anzac command ordered that the attack was to proceed, but this time the light horsemen would support the New Zealander attack on Chunuk Bair, and not the other way around as originally intended. This change of situation did not bode well for the Australians.



*Above: General Frederic Godfrey Hughes, who was in command for the disastrous charge, reportedly shrunk from the responsibility of command*

**“THE LIGHT HORSEMEN WOULD SUPPORT THE NEW ZEALANDER ATTACK ON CHUNUK BAIR, AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND AS ORIGINALLY INTENDED. THIS CHANGE OF SITUATION DID NOT BODE WELL FOR THE AUSTRALIANS”**

*Below: Dead Ottoman soldiers lay scattered over the ground*







Above: Harold Rush's headstone recalls his last words

Even worse, the bombardment appeared to end seven minutes early, at 4.23am. The reason for this was later found to be a mistake with the synchronising of watches between the artillery officer and the officers of Third Light Horse Brigade. This error meant that the Turks had ample time to man their trenches, knowing an assault was coming. In addition, the neighbouring assaults by the First and Second Light Horse Brigades on positions known as the Chessboard and Quinn's Post did occur on time at 4.30am and had in fact failed by the time the officers of the Third Light Horse Brigade realised their mistake. By the time the first wave of 150 men went over the top, the Turks were not only fully prepared to receive the assault, they were also virtually unmolested in their defence.

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Henry White, commanding officer of Eighth Light Horse

Regiment, insisted on leading the first wave of 150 men personally. These men, all hailing from Victoria, were immediately met by a murderous hail of rifle and machine gun fire. Within 30 seconds the colonel and most of his men were either killed or wounded. It was clear that any continuation of the attack would be futile in these conditions. Supporting attacks by the other light horse brigades had already been aborted, and the supporting assault by the Eighth Royal Welch Fusiliers, to the right flank of Colonel White's men, was also suspended. It was clear that the whole attack had failed. However, there was no one to cancel the second wave of Victorians, who two minutes later 'hopped the bags' and scrambled over the dead and wounded of their fallen comrades to meet the same fate. None of the men shirked their duty. Few made it even halfway.

**“LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALEXANDER HENRY WHITE, COMMANDING OFFICER OF EIGHTH LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT, INSISTED ON LEADING THE FIRST WAVE OF 150 MEN PERSONALLY. THESE MEN, ALL HAILING FROM VICTORIA, WERE IMMEDIATELY MET BY A MURDEROUS HAIL OF RIFLE AND MACHINE GUN FIRE”**







Attempting to prevent another wave charging into certain death was Lieutenant Colonel Noel Brazier, commander of the Tenth Light Horse Regiment. He claimed that, "The whole thing was nothing but bloody murder". Unfortunately, due to marker flags having been seen in the Turkish trenches, Brazier could not persuade the stubborn brigade major, Colonel John Antill – who had taken over command of the brigade – to stop the attack. It is now believed that the marker flags were probably those of the First Light Horse Brigade who had briefly captured a Turkish trench on their flank.

Brazier ordered the third wave forward, this time men from Western Australia, the Tenth Light Horse Regiment, who met the same fate. Knowing that it would be certain death, many fell flat to the ground as soon as they had left the trenches, which helped to reduce the casualties suffered in this assault. Brazier again tried to prevent a further wave going over the top, and this time he found General Hughes, commander of the brigade, who agreed that sending more men would be futile. Unfortunately, before communication was sent to the last wave to inform them that the attack has been cancelled, part of the fourth wave went over the top.

By the time commanders realised the futility of the attack, four waves had gone over the top in little more than 15 minutes. The ground separating the trenches, little bigger than three tennis courts, was covered with dead and dying light horsemen. The Eighth Light Horse

## **“THE NEK WAS A DISASTER ON AN EPIC SCALE, BUT IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT IT IS BUT ONE INCIDENT IN A CATALOGUE OF UNMITIGATED DISASTERS AT GALLIPOLI”**

suffered the highest casualties, losing 234 of its 300 men, 154 fatal. The Tenth suffered 138 casualties, 80 fatal.

The actual numbers involved in these losses might pale alongside some of the big battles on the Western Front such as Fromelles. For Australia, The Nek was a disaster on an epic scale, but it should be remembered that it is but one incident in a catalogue of unmitigated disasters at Gallipoli. While at the Nek there were 372 casualties in one morning, in one night the Australians at Fromelles suffered 5,533 casualties. But The Nek has rightfully been condemned in history as not only a tragic but also a futile attack. This event has become synonymous with the whole Gallipoli myth – a campaign that many Australians latch on to as a key moment in their struggle for national identity.

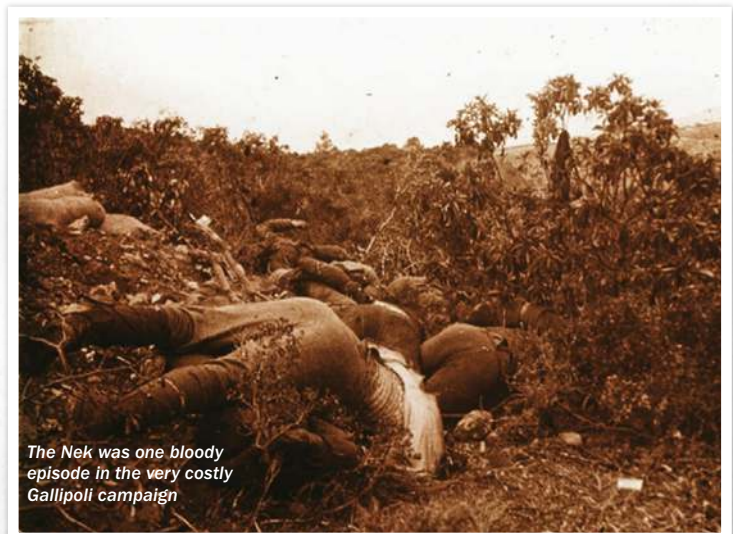
The Australian Light Horse attack at The Nek was immortalised in Peter Weir’s 1981 Oscar-

winning film *Gallipoli*. The film’s cinematography is spectacular and its musical score is nothing short of mesmerising, and it all culminates in the charge of the light horsemen. In this film, the attack is used to tell the story of these heroic young colonials being sent needlessly to their deaths by incompetent and vindictive British officers. The inaccuracies compound the myth by depicting the suicidal charge as a British-ordered attack that sacrificed innocent Australian lives in a diversion, while British soldiers drank their tea on the beaches at Suvla. In the climax, an officer with an English accent sends the four successive waves of these keen but inexperienced Australians to their deaths, clearly an example of the incompetent British recklessly squandering Australian lives.

While Britain had its fair share of incompetent commanders, so did the Australians. After the first two waves had been cut down, a commanding officer requests a cancellation (a request carried in the film at great risk by Mel Gibson’s character). He is refused, and a third wave that includes the sprinter Wilfrid Harper, on whom the Archie Hamilton character was based, goes the way of the previous two. According to Charles Bean, the Australian official historian, Wilfrid was last seen “running forward like a schoolboy in a foot race with all the speed he could compass”. His body was never found, like that of his brother Gresley, who was killed in the same charge.



*Australian soldiers collect and bury the dead of both sides during a temporary armistice in 1915*



*The Nek was one bloody episode in the very costly Gallipoli campaign*

**Below: No Man’s Land at The Nek. It was here that Australian soldiers charged with bayonets fixed**





But the film *Gallipoli* was not the first to immortalise the charge at The Nek. During the campaign, both British and Australian press latched onto this tragic tale. *The London Standard* published the story under the headline 'Honour the Light Brigade', comparing the bravery of the light horse with past British military deeds at Balaklava in the Crimean war, stating, "In the years that are to come this deed which the men of Victoria and Western Australia did along with many another in that bloodstained zone will bear its part in keeping the people of the British name together by the common memory of glorious deeds." Bloody military disasters seem to capture the imagination of the British and Australian public alike.

But why should fact get in the way of a good story? It is inaccurate and unfair to blame 'callous' British generals for the slaughter at The Nek, as there were no British officers commanding the assault. The attack also had nothing to do with supporting the British landing at Suvla, but rather the intention was to support their Anzac brethren, the New Zealanders. While Australians should be rightfully proud of their soldiers, we should not diminish others in the process.

Who then were the British officers? In fact, the two main incompetents were Australian – Brigadier General Hughes and Colonel Antill. As L.A. Carlyon wrote, "Hughes was the brigade commander and didn't command; Antill wasn't the brigade commander and he

## **"WILFRID WAS LAST SEEN 'RUNNING FORWARD LIKE A SCHOOLBOY IN A FOOT RACE WITH ALL THE SPEED HE COULD COMPASS'. HIS BODY WAS NEVER FOUND"**

did. Responsibility rattled Hughes and, either consciously or unconsciously, he walked away from it. Antill behaved as he always did, like a bull strung up in barbed wire." The tragic deaths suffered at The Nek were the result of bad Australian decision-making, not British command. That said, it is important to remember that errors at all levels were made in World War I, as commanders on all sides struggled with the reality of modern industrialised warfare. Some generals were better than others, and it was not uncommon for the poor generals to be replaced. Gallipoli had its fair share of generals who were dismissed, including the general officer

commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, Sir Ian Hamilton. By the war's end, the quality of British and Australian leadership was predominantly very good, a point recognised by military historians as a key factor in the Allies winning the war.

If you visit The Nek cemetery today, you will be struck by the narrowness of the area, the few light horsemen who have headstones and the peacefulness of the Gallipoli area. It was too beautiful a battlefield to die, but many did. One of the few light horse troopers who has a headstone is English-born Harold Rush, Tenth Light Horse Regiment, who died in the third wave. His body was recovered and is buried in Walker's Ridge Cemetery, overlooking the beaches and Suvla Bay. His epitaph reads, "His Last words, 'Goodbye Cobber God Bless you'".

But it is the heart-rending words attributed to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who was a commander of Ottoman forces in Gallipoli during World War I and later the founder of modern Turkey, that fittingly ends this article: "Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours... You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."



Today there is a white marble commemoration where the Ottoman trenches were



# VARNA

The Christians of central Europe were on the verge of vanquishing the Ottoman Turks in a bloody clash, but recklessness cost them the battle

VARNA, BULGARIA 10 NOVEMBER 1444



WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH






**O**n the morning of 10 November, 1444, a strong wind blew into the faces of the Crusaders manning a crescent-shaped line 3.2 kilometres (two miles) west of the Black Sea port of Varna. Suddenly thousands of Turkish foot soldiers swept down from the forested hills to the north. While Ottoman archers armed with powerful composite bows shot flights of arrows, other warriors armed with swords, axes and maces rushed towards the Crusaders' right flank. Mounted Crusaders in the front line withdrew to a safe distance to avoid the volleys of lethal arrows. In so doing, they exposed a line of war wagons parked end-to-end that guarded the crusader camp.

As the Turkish foot soldiers rushed headlong towards the wagons, Hungarian crossbowmen and hand gunners fired into the thick mass of enemy soldiers through holes in the armoured carts. Hungarian foot soldiers wielding flails and halberds hacked and slashed at the Turks who tried to pierce the formidable barrier. The attackers managed to topple several of the wagons and penetrate the barrier, but a furious counterattack drove them back.

The Turks entrusted with turning the Crusaders' right flank had failed to achieve their objective. From that point forward, Ottoman Sultan Murad II would have to rely on the superior numbers of his light cavalry, known as sipahis, to defeat King Władysław's heavily armoured knights. It would be a battle to the death, as the Crusaders had their backs to the Black Sea and no easy path of retreat should they lose the battle.


## OPPOSING FORCES




**CRUSADERS**

**LEADERS:**  
János Hunyadi,  
King Władysław of  
Poland & Hungary

**CAVALRY:** 19,000  
**INFANTRY:** 1,300





**OTTOMANS**

**LEADER:**  
Sultan Murad II

**CAVALRY:** 35,000  
**INFANTRY:** 15,000

## Rise of the Ottomans

By the time of the Crusade of Varna in the mid-15th century, the Ottoman Turks were slowly but steadily advancing north through the Balkan Peninsula towards the Kingdom of Hungary. Founded by Osman I in 1299, the Islamic Ottoman Sultanate took root in north-western Anatolia. By the close of the 14th century the Ottomans had displaced the Byzantine Greeks as the dominant power in the region. Although at the time of the Varna Crusade the Byzantine Empire had not yet been ground completely into the dust under the sultan's heel, it was on the brink of annihilation. The rump Byzantine Empire of the 1440s consisted of only the walled city of Constantinople and the Despotate of Morea (Peloponnese). At the outset of his reign Murad II had besieged Constantinople in 1422, but an insurrection in the east had forced him to leave the city.

Nearly 50 years earlier Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos sent envoys to Western Europe to beseech the Papacy and Latin nobility to send troops to preserve the empire. The result was the Nicopolis Crusade in which a Franco-Hungarian army led by Hungarian King

*Victorious Ottoman Sultan Murad II views the body of slain Polish King Władysław III after the battle*





Sigismund was soundly defeated in 1396 by Sultan Bayezid I's formidable army in the rolling hills south of the Bulgarian stronghold of Nicopolis. If the Christians learned anything from their defeat, it was that the Ottomans possessed a professional army that rivalled any in Christendom.

By the mid-15th century another great crusade was in the offing. On 1 January 1443 Pope Eugenius IV called on the Catholic faithful to participate in a new crusade against the Ottomans. Its purpose was to drive the Turks from the Balkans, thereby loosening their grip on Constantinople. The Christians would have to fight their way 700 kilometres (435 miles) from Belgrade to Edirne (Adrianople), which was the principal Ottoman base in Rumelia, the European portion of the Ottoman Sultanate. Because England and France were embroiled in the Hundred Years' War it largely fell to the Catholic Hungarians to oppose the Ottomans.

### Crusader recruiting drive

Serbia and Wallachia had been puppet states of the Ottoman Sultanate since 1389 and 1395 respectively. In order for the Crusaders to field a sizeable army against the Ottomans, it was necessary that they received the military support of both vassal states, whose leaders seemed willing to go to war to be free from the Ottoman yoke. The senior military commander of the Hungarian forces at the time was János Hunyadi, the voivode (governor) of Transylvania, which was part of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Pope Eugenius's right-hand man when it came to matters involving military operations

## "THE OFFER OF A TRUCE WAS GENUINE, AS MURAD HAD GROWN WEARY OF WARFARE"

against the Ottomans was Cardinal Julian Cesarini. The papal legate played a crucial role by resolving political disputes behind the scenes that threatened to derail cooperation among the Christian kingdoms involved in countering the Ottoman menace. A succession crisis occurred in Hungary in 1439 when there was no male heir to the throne. The Hungarian aristocracy gave the throne to the youthful King Władysław III of Poland in March 1440 with the proviso that he go to war against the Ottomans.

King Władysław and Hunyadi embarked on a limited campaign against the Ottomans in late 1443. The objective of the Long Campaign, as it became known, was to roll back the Ottoman conquests in Serbia made at the expense of beleaguered Serbian Despot George Brankovic. The 25,000 Christian troops drove the Ottomans from Serbia, but the attack ground to a halt in Sofia, Bulgaria.

In the aftermath of the campaign, Sultan Murad adopted new weapons used by the Europeans so that his army would be able to compete evenly against the Christians in future wars. He created an artillery train with heavy bombards and lighter cannon and also equipped a significant number of his janissaries with 'hand-cannons', as primitive hand guns were called in the 15th century.

### Offer of peace

Murad appealed directly to King Władysław for a ten-year truce. The offer of a truce was genuine, as Murad had grown weary of warfare and intended to abdicate in favour of his 12-year-old son Mehmet II. A continuation of the war meant that Serbia and Transylvania were likely to lose territory if the Ottomans were victorious. Brankovic was keen on peace, for he not only stood to lose territory but his two sons were also Murad's prisoners.

The proposal came at a time when there was heated debate about whether to resume operations against the Ottomans in Rumelia (the Balkans). The Papacy argued for a combined land-sea operation by which the Crusaders would capture the stronghold of Varna on the Black Sea. The Papal fleet, which comprised galleys from the Papacy, Venice, Burgundy and Ragusa, totalled 30 galleys. Genoan galleys were conspicuously absent from the Papal fleet, as the Genoese did not want to jeopardise their close mercantile relationship with the Ottomans.

The crusader fleet's first objective was to establish a blockade of the Dardanelles that would prevent Murad from ferrying his royal army from Anatolia to Rumelia. Afterwards, it was to support the operations of the crusader army by taking up station in the Black Sea. It was a plan that was fraught with problems, considering the difficulties that medieval armies had with synchronising their movements over long distances.

Władysław vacillated between whether to renew military operations against the Ottoman Sultanate or whether to accept the peace



Polish King Władysław III leads his heavy cavalry in a desperate charge against the Ottoman army at Varna



treaty. His behaviour throughout the spring and summer of 1444 caused substantial confusion and bedevilled his subjects and allies alike. The preparations for a crusade against Ottoman Rumelia proceeded unabated despite negotiations between Murad and Wladyslaw. Murad, who wanted to end the war in Rumelia in order to abdicate his throne, offered to cease military operations against Hungary and Serbia for ten years, guarantee the independence of Bosnia and northern Serbia, release Brankovic's two sons who were held in Ottoman captivity and pay 100,000 gold florins

in reparations. Wladyslaw's emissaries and Murad agreed to the final terms of the Treaty of Szeged on 12 June 1443 in Adrianople.

Sultan Murad departed for Anatolia in mid-July in order to transfer the throne to his young son. He had grown weary of the day-to-day challenges of ruling the sultanate, as well as leading its army in battle. But Murad had no sooner gone into retirement than he was recalled to power in September to lead Ottoman forces against the Crusaders.

### Broken oath

Wladyslaw swore an oath on 1 August to honour the treaty, and then three days later renounced it. Cesarini absolved him of his oaths, stating he did not have to honour an oath to an infidel. In swearing the oath, Wladyslaw sought to ensure that Murad left Rumelia so that it would be defended by an under-strength army. Everything seemed to be going according to plan, but Murad soon discovered the deception.

The Ottoman sultans were masters of dividing and weakening their enemies through truces and treaties. When Wladyslaw reneged on the truce, Murad's emissaries quickly arranged a separate treaty that same month with Serbian Despot George Brankovic.

In return for remaining neutral in future Christian wars against the Ottomans, Brankovic's sons were released from captivity and all of his lands in northern Serbia were returned to him. Wladyslaw was something of a neophyte when it came to complex political negotiations and did not realise that a separate peace for Serbia would deprive him of 8,000 Serbian troops in the upcoming crusade.

The Papal fleet arrived at Constantinople in July. Although they made contact with the Byzantine Greeks, they received very few updates of the progress of the crusade. The Papal and Venetian vessels blockaded the Dardanelles while the Burgundian and Ragusan vessels took up station in the Bosphorus. As the months passed by the crews grew weary of the blockade. Nevertheless, they continued maintaining their blockade while anxiously awaiting word that the army had marched. In mid-September they learned that rumours of a peace deal were false when Cardinal Cesarini sent word to the Byzantine Emperor informing him that the Crusaders would soon advance.

The arrival of a fleet of galleys from various Latin powers with hostile intentions was further proof to Sultan Murad and his generals that the Hungarians intended to renew military operations against them. What's more, it



Left: King Wladyslaw perished leading his Polish knights against the Ottoman centre

**“OTTOMAN SULTANS WERE MASTERS OF DIVIDING AND WEAKENING THEIR ENEMIES”**

Gifted general János Hunyadi led the Hungarian forces at Varna





showed that the Catholic Hungarians had the backing of Latin Christendom. The Genoans, who had flatly stated they had no intention of assisting the Pope with his military objectives, continued trading with the Ottomans.

### Road to Bulgaria

The Polish and Hungarian core of the crusader army had assembled at Szegeed in southern Hungary in September. They would embark on the crusade without the Serbians and Albanians, which potentially could have contributed 8,000 and 3,000 troops respectively. Brankovic deliberately used his army to block the Albanians from marching to join the Crusaders.

Wladyslaw received bad news on the eve of the campaign when he learned that the Polish contingent would be smaller than originally expected because some knights demanded an exorbitant fee to participate. What's more, Wladyslaw could not shake the feeling that it had been wrong to break the treaty with Sultan Murad. Nevertheless, Hunyadi and Cesarini were adamant that the crusade must go forward, and the impressionable young king followed their lead. The crusader army crossed the Danube River on 22 September at Orsova. They followed the serpentine course of the Danube into Ottoman territory in Bulgaria.

At Nicopolis, the site of the crusader disaster in 1396, the Wallachian voivode Vlad II Dracul arrived with 7,000 troops. When he saw the meagre number of Crusaders, he urged Wladyslaw to turn back as he would be greatly outnumbered by the Ottomans. To prove his point, Dracul quipped that Murad took more men

The iron and leather armour worn by Ottoman cavalry, with a curved cavalry blade



### 08 SEVERED HEAD ON A SPEAR

Wladyslaw is unhorsed and slain in the ill-advised attack. The janissaries behead Wladyslaw and mount his severed head on a spear. When the Crusaders see that the king has been slain they become demoralised. Hunyadi's attempts to rally the Crusader knights are in vain and they quit the battlefield.

### 06 HUNYADI'S GLORIOUS ATTACK

Hunyadi leads Hungarian, Saxon, Transylvanian and Wallachian cavalry in a successful counterattack against the Rumelian sipahis. The bloodthirsty Wallachians pursue the retreating Rumelian cavalry for over five kilometres (three miles). When the Crusader horsemen reach the Ottoman camp, they loot it rather than returning to the main battle.

### 07 CHARGE OF THE POLISH KNIGHTS

Wladyslaw's Polish knights believe Hunyadi is stealing all of the glory for himself. They urge Wladyslaw to lead them in a charge against the Ottoman centre so that they can share in the glory of victory. Wladyslaw complies and orders an attack. But his mounted knights fail to penetrate the janissaries' fortifications.

JANISSARIES

RUMELIAN CAVALRY

HUNGARIANS & TRANSYLVANIANS

LAKE VARNA

### 05 CRUSADER RESERVE ADVANCES

The Rumelian sipahis charge the Crusader left wing manned by Hungarians, Saxons and Transylvanians, which buckles under their furious assault. Hunyadi leads the Wallachian reserve to reinforce the left wing. Before he departs, he advises Wladyslaw to remain on the defensive until he returns.

**“HUNYADI AND CESARINI WERE ADAMANT THAT THE CRUSADE MUST GO FORWARD, AND THE IMPRESSIONABLE YOUNG KING FOLLOWED THEIR LEAD”**



**“ANATOLIAN SIPAHIS LAUNCH A DEVASTATING ATTACK AGAINST THE EXPOSED LEFT FLANK OF THE CROATIAN AND HUNGARIAN CAVALRY”**

**03 OTTOMAN COUNTERATTACK**

Anatolian sipahis launch a devastating attack against the exposed left flank of the Croatian and Hungarian cavalry. Large numbers of the knights in the crusader right wing are slain, including Cardinal Cesarini. The survivors flee and take refuge behind the wagenburg.

**02 BREAKING RANKS**

Following a failed attempt by Ottoman azabs to penetrate the wagenburg, Croatian and Hungarian heavy cavalry break ranks to pursue the retreating azabs. Their exposed flanks invite a counterattack.

**01 VARNA 1444**

The Crusader camp is protected by a wagenburg in which armoured wagons are parked end-to-end. Hand gunners and crossbowmen fire through holes in the wagon sides, and foot soldiers armed with halberds and flails protect the space between the wagons and any breaches.

**04 SWIRLING MELEE**

King Władysław and Hunyadi counterattack the Anatolian cavalry. A fierce melee occurs in which the two sides fight against each other at close quarters with swords, battle axes and maces. The Anatolian commander is slain and his troops are driven from the battlefield.

**ANATOLIAN CAVALRY**

**OTTOMAN IRREGULARS**

**HUNGARIANS & CROATIANS**

**WALLACHIANS**

**CHRISTIAN CAMP**

**VARNA**

**BLACK SEA**



Map: Rocio Espin



The many different types of Ottoman troops can be seen in this depiction of the Siege of Belgrade in 1456



with him on a hunting trip than Wladyslaw had in his entire army. Although Dracul was an Ottoman vassal, he had every intention of supporting a crusader army that might free him from his servitude to the sultan. He entrusted the command of his army to his two capable sons, Radu and Vlad (the infamous Vlad the Impaler of the Dracula legend) and returned home.

Unable to force their way through the passes in the Bulgarian mountain range held by the Ottomans, the Crusaders had no choice but to take a circuitous route to Edirne via Varna. From Varna they planned to march south on the coastal road along the Black Sea to Burgas and then march west to Edirne.

After he returned to lead the Ottoman force that would defend against the crusader strike towards Edirne, Murad moved quickly to mobilise the Anatolian army. By the middle of the month the vanguard of the army had reached the Dardanelles. Realising it was impossible to cross with the bulk of the crusader fleet blocking his passage, he shifted north to the Bosphorus. He believed his massive bronze bombards could destroy the Burgundian and Ragusan galleys in the narrowness of the Bosphorous Strait. When the Ottomans deployed the guns the crusader ships withdrew. Murad then paid the Genoese to transport his army across to the European shore. Once his troops were across the Bosphorous, Murad ordered bombards to be deployed on the west side, too. With bombards on both shores of the strait, the Ottomans were able to prevent the crusader fleet from entering the Black Sea and rendezvousing with the crusader army.

By early November Wladyslaw was steadily advancing east across northern Bulgaria towards Varna. By that time Murad had united his Rumelian and Anatolian forces and had

**“HUNYADI’S EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP CAN BE SEEN BY THE STRENGTH OF THE CRUSADER POSITION”**

Ottoman Sultan Murad II rapidly mobilised 40,000 Turks and led them across the Bosphorus to defeat the crusaders







Stanisław Chlebowski's painting of the Battle of Varna shows the devastation wrought on both armies. It was a costly victory for the Ottomans

crossed the Balkan Mountains. By the time Władysław reached Varna on 9 November the Ottoman army was only a day behind. On the morning of 10 November the crusader army deployed for battle three kilometres (two miles) west of Varna. They deployed facing west in a wide arc, with their northern flank anchored on the mountains and their southern flank anchored on Lake Varna. As a strong wind blew from the east, they heard the mighty kettle drums of the Ottoman army signalling their advance to battle.

### Bittersweet victory

Cesarini and the Greek Orthodox Bishop Jan Deminek led the Crusader right, consisting of 6,500 Hungarians and Transylvanians. Władysław and Hunyadi led the centre, consisting of 3,500 Polish and Hungarian knights, and Hunyadi's brother-in-law Michael Szilagyí led the crusader left, composed of 5,000 Hungarians and Transylvanians. The reserve consisted of 4,000 Wallachians.

In the rear of the crusader army a force of 1,300 Hungarian infantry manned the wagenburg guarding the crusader camp. Except for the camp guards, the entire force was mounted. Although outnumbered nearly two to one, the Crusaders were heavily armoured, which helped to offset their numbers.

The Ottoman right wing consisted of 15,000 Rumelian horsemen under Sehabeddin Pasha, and the left wing consisted of 20,000 Anatolian horsemen under the command of Guyegu Karaca bin Abdullah Pasha, Murad's son-in-law. Murad commanded the reserve of 10,000 janissaries, as well as the camel cavalry. The reserve was deployed behind the two wings. Davud Pasha commanded the 5,000 azab foot soldiers deployed on the hills to the north that overlooked the crusader right.

Hunyadi's excellent leadership can be seen by the strength of the crusader position. With both flanks anchored, the Ottomans were foiled in trying their basic tactic of trying to encircle their opponent. The din created by more than 50,000 troops engaged in a set piece battle was terrifying and overwhelming. Crusader trumpets blared, Ottoman drums boomed, and the clang of steel was pierced by screams of agony from the thousands of dead and dying men and horses. The battle began with a failed attack by Ottoman irregulars against the crusader right, and then the Anatolian and Hungarian cavalry fought in a series of charges and counter-charges that resulted in the death of Cesarini and the collapse of the crusader right flank.

Hunyadi seemed to be everywhere at once. The Crusaders were heartened by the sight of Hunyadi mounted on his white horse wearing his trademark silver helmet and sporting a shield decorated with a raven. He not only led the Hungarian cavalry in a successful charge against the Anatolian horsemen that resulted in the death of Guyegu Karaca, but the Hungarian general then led the Wallachian reserve in a devastating counterattack that smashed the Rumelian cavalry on the other side of the field. By early afternoon only the sultan's janissaries and camel cavalry remained.

But the Sultan's best troops held a formidable position within an earthen fort constructed around two Thracian burial mounds. The janissaries had excavated a ditch and used the dirt to build a rampart. To prevent cavalry from breaching the rampart, they had driven iron spikes into the top of it. Moreover, they were armed with bows and handguns.

When Władysław ordered a headlong charge against this barrier, droves of Crusaders were shot from their horses. The few horses that

were trained well enough to try to leap the barrier were impaled on the spikes. Meanwhile, some of the Ottoman mounted sipahis had returned to assist the sultan. One of them unhorsed Władysław and he was hacked to death by the sultan's foot soldiers. When his severed head was raised on a spear, the crusader cavalry quit the field.

The heavy casualties left both sides reeling from the encounter. The bulk of the Crusaders, Hunyadi among them, tried to flee north on mountain paths through hostile country. The Ottoman army was in such a damaged state that Murad's troops did not begin their pursuit of the fleeing Crusaders for three days.

Vlad II Dracul, Murad's Transylvanian vassal, held Hunyadi captive for a short time but eventually released him. No more large-scale offensives were launched against the Ottomans. The Hungarians switched to the defensive, and the Greek Byzantines were left to their own devices. It was only a matter of time before Constantinople fell to the Ottomans. On 29 May 1453 Murad's son Sultan Mehmet II led his victorious forces into the great city after a 53-day siege. He owed his success in part to his father's victory at Varna.

### FURTHER READING

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- ✦ IMBER, COLIN. *THE CRUSADE OF VARNA, 1443-45* (ALDERSHOT, ENGLAND: ASHGATE: 2006)
- ✦ JEFFERSON, JOHN. *THE HOLY WARS OF KING WLADISLAW AND SULTAN MURAD: THE OTTOMAN-CHRISTIAN CONFLICT FROM 1438-1444* (BRILL, 2012)



Right: Robert Callow wearing the green beret that all British commandos are entitled to wear



**INTERVIEW WITH**

**DR ROBERT CALLOW**

# FAR EAST COMMANDO

**PART I**

WORDS TOM GARNER

## THE BRIDGES NEAR THE RIVER KWAI



British soldiers investigate a jungle clearing in Burma with bayonets poised. Callow recalled, "If there was a leaf that looked wrong it alerted you."



In this first of a two-part interview, Dr Robert Callow describes his action-packed experiences conducting sabotage operations against the Japanese Army during World War II



**“THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMANDOS ARE EITHER KILLED OR CAPTURED AND THE OFFICER LANDS IN THE RIVER. HIS ONLY OBJECTIVE NOW IS TO SURVIVE”**



**I**t is dawn over a Burmese river in late 1943. Above the misty water an aircraft flies overhead containing six British commandos. Among their number is a young lieutenant who is about to go on his first mission to wreak destruction behind enemy lines. Although he is still in his teens, the officer is already a skilled professional, and he is strapped up with various demolition bombs. Nevertheless, when he jumps from the plane, events spiral out of control. The commandos have been spotted and enemy machine guns fire into the sky, creating deadly tracers that resemble hosepipe jets. The majority of the commandos are either killed or captured and the officer lands in the river. His only objective now is to survive.

The officer in question is Second Lieutenant Robert Callow, an expert in explosives and languages who would subsequently survive to become a prolific saboteur against the Japanese in Burma. As a commando in Force 136, Inter-Services Liaison Department, Callow spent almost a year fighting behind enemy lines destroying bridges, transport columns and communication lines, but his military career took him far beyond the jungles of Burma. Callow also fought in China and Malaya and witnessed the brutal partition of India, among other dramatic events. He would go on to be awarded a doctorate in neurophysics and is still, in his 90s, a consultant for the British government. The following two instalments tell his extraordinary story.

### **Languages and explosives**

Born in 1925, Callow volunteered to join the British Army aged only 17 in 1942. “My father served in the Boer War and was at the Battle of Spion Kop, but he had been gassed twice in World War I and died in 1938. Before he died he told me, ‘When you get in [the armed forces] don’t join the PBI [‘Poor Bloody Infantry’], get into your own regiment.’ Therefore, when I was ‘18’ – I was actually 17 and three-quarters – I volunteered for the Royal Engineers where I started out as a sapper.”

Before he volunteered, Callow had been a bright pupil at King Henry VIII Grammar School in Coventry where he excelled at languages. “There were two streams there – languages and science – but they put me into languages without asking me. I consequently learnt French, German, Spanish and Old Greek and that dictated my future.”

Callow’s military career would largely be based around his linguistic skills, but his training as a sapper was literally both constructive and destructive as he discovered another skill. “The Royal Engineers are the



ones that build bridges and blow them up again! I did six months in basic training, which included building Bailey bridges and carrying heavy loads. I was six-feet [1.83-metres] tall then and very well built. The Bailey bridge had two panels, with each one weighing 660 pounds [300 kilograms] and six men had to put it up. We also trained in a place called 'Hungry Hill' where they taught us how to use explosives, which is my speciality."

Working with explosives came naturally. "I found I had a talent for it. There are cutting and expanding explosives. We learned how to use each one of these. Mercury fulminate is the fastest explosive. Nitro-glycerine is fast but Mercury fulminate is the one that starts off all the other explosives. Amatol is a slow explosive that expands whereas nitro-glycerine cuts through steel and it could cut you in half."

Callow was made a lance corporal and he was posted to Scotland, where he became an explosives instructor at a Command Operation School. He then returned to England for assault and pre-airborne exercises. Callow remembered his airborne training as hair-raising. "We first learned how to drop off the back of moving lorries and rolling over. Then we went out of a barrage balloon, and that was the worst drop, from about 900 feet (275 metres), because you could see the dogs on the ground. Normally, we would drop from about 2,000 feet (600 metres) but that's the thing: when you jump from about 2,000 feet you've got time to sort yourself out!"

Callow became a qualified paratrooper, and his unique skills led to him being sent for officer

**"YOU HAD TO LEARN ALL THESE THINGS BECAUSE THAT WAS WHAT SPECIAL FORCES WAS ALL ABOUT. IT TOOK THEM TWO YEARS TO TEACH ME ALL THAT I HAD TO KNOW BEFORE I STARTED FIGHTING"**

training and a distant deployment. "When I had finished they wondered what to do with me, so they sent me to the War Office selection board. They sent me to a cadet training unit and I finished as a second lieutenant. By that time I already knew languages and explosives so they said, 'All right: languages, explosives, bridges... out to India!' They sent me to India by sea, and while we were on the ship (it took six weeks to get to Bombay) we had to learn Urdu. With languages it's all about having a musical ear and I'm good at picking up accents."

Urdu was the first of many Asian languages that Callow would eventually learn for the army. In what was still colonial India at the time, "There are about 12 main Indian dialects and one odd one, which is Tamil. Tamil is 14,000 years old and related to bushman languages such as the Australian aborigines, so it is a difficult one."

Callow discovered that many Indian languages had their roots in a legendary warrior from antiquity. "The languages in northern India are based on Sanskrit and ultimately Farsi. That was taken into India by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. He started the languages in northern India and all of them are related to it. There are about seven of those, and although I'm not fluent in them I know enough to get by."

In addition to Indian and European languages, Callow also became fluent in Malay and can also speak Cantonese and Arabic. However, the military idea behind learning languages was not purely for linguistics. "The reason I learned all these languages is that we had to know the culture of the people, particularly so that we would not offend them. You also had to know their religions, history and customs. You had to learn all these things because that was what Special Forces was all about. It took them two years to teach me all that I had to know before I started fighting."

### The Burma Campaign

When Callow arrived in India the Allies were only just beginning to turn the tide of the war in the Far East. In 1941 Imperial Japan had launched lightning attacks to expand Japanese territories in the Pacific region and vast swathes of European colonies had fallen. Hong Kong and Indochina had capitulated with ease, while the British suffered its worst defeat during World War II when they lost the Malay Peninsula and Singapore. 80,000 Allied personnel were taken



*An Allied patrol crosses a stream in northern Burma, March 1944. The troop consists British, American and local Kachin fighters*



PART I: THE BRIDGES NEAR THE RIVER KWAI

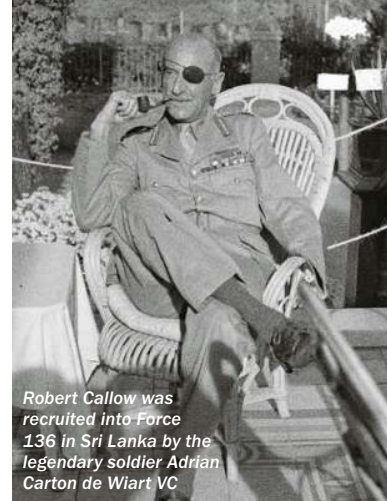
*An aerial shot of a railway bridge being destroyed with explosives over a river. Callow would use nitro-glycerine to blow up enemy bridges*



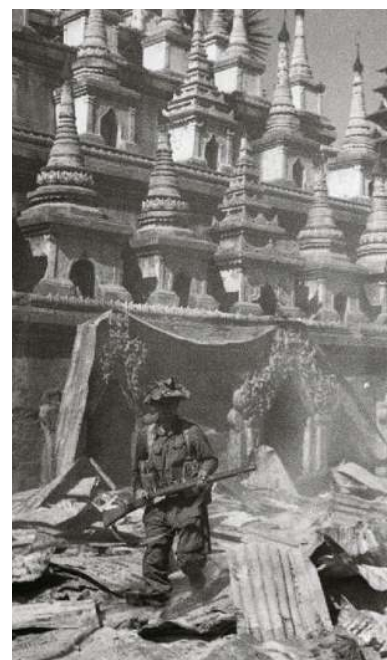




A view of the Burmese jungle from the tail of an aircraft during WWII. Callow was parachuted into dense landscapes such as this



Robert Callow was recruited into Force 136 in Sri Lanka by the legendary soldier Adrian Carton de Wiart VC



prisoner, but the situation deteriorated further when the Japanese overran the Dutch East Indies and captured many island bases in the western Pacific. The security of both Australia and India was threatened, and the Japanese invaded Burma in early 1942.

The Japanese advance into Burma had two goals: to prevent military aid from travelling overland on the Burma Road into nationalist China, and to place their forces at the door of the Indian border. It was believed that the near presence of the Japanese army would spark an insurrection against the British Raj, and thousands of captured Indian soldiers from Singapore had already been recruited by a Bengali nationalist to form an 'Indian National Army' to fight the British.

The invasion of Burma began well for the Japanese and Rangoon was captured, which deprived the Chinese of their only easily accessible supply base. Meanwhile, the British Burma Corps retreated under a scorched-earth policy until May 1942, when a tense stalemate lasted until the end of the year. In 1943 Lord Louis Mountbatten became the supreme allied commander of South East Asia Command, but the Allied resurgence in Burma was largely thanks to Lieutenant General William Slim and Brigadier Orde Wingate.

Wingate had created special operations units known as 'Chindits' to perform long-range raids against Japanese troops, facilities and communication lines. The Chindits initially

incurred heavy losses, but their courage and endurance proved that British forces could take on the Japanese in the Burmese jungle. Elsewhere, Slim became the commander of 14th Army, imbued it with a new spirit and encouraged the soldiers to hold firm against Japanese attacks while they were supplied from the air.

When the Japanese attempted to strike Assam and the Arakan 14th Army stood firm, and fierce battles raged, with both sides fighting for every inch of ground. Nevertheless, the Japanese were now outnumbered and with American and Chinese Nationalist forces entering Burma from the north the tide began to turn in the Allies' favour. It was into this bitterly fought and harsh campaign that Second Lieutenant Robert Callow would be parachuted as a commando.

**“THE CHINDITS INITIALLY INCURRED HEAVY LOSSES, BUT THEIR COURAGE AND ENDURANCE PROVED THAT BRITISH FORCES COULD TAKE ON THE JAPANESE”**

### Force 136

Upon his arrival in India, Callow expanded his training to include paramedic skills for jungle warfare, “There are no hospitals in the jungle so I had to do a nine-month course in Madras Medical College, learning how to do amputations. They wouldn't let me practice on real people so I could only do it on cadavers. I also practised giving painkillers, stitching wounds, giving anaesthetic and, if need be, if a man was going to die or be captured then we would give him morphine.”

During his paramedic training Callow was recruited into a British Special Forces unit known as 'Force 136', which formed part of the 'Inter-Services Liaison Department' (ISLD). The ISLD was the same organisation as the more famous 'Special Operations Executive' (SOE) that had been formed in 1940 to carry out sabotage and subversive operations behind enemy lines in occupied Europe. Once the war with Japan had begun it was decided to adapt the SOE in the Far East, and the ISLD acquired its deliberately bland name to provide operational cover.

The ISLD established its headquarters in India, and the code name Force 136 was used for commando sections being formed in French Indochina, Malaya, Siam and Burma. Force 136 was allocated its own RAF squadron for airborne missions, and all recruits were volunteers who either had knowledge of the country, previous experience in Europe or a

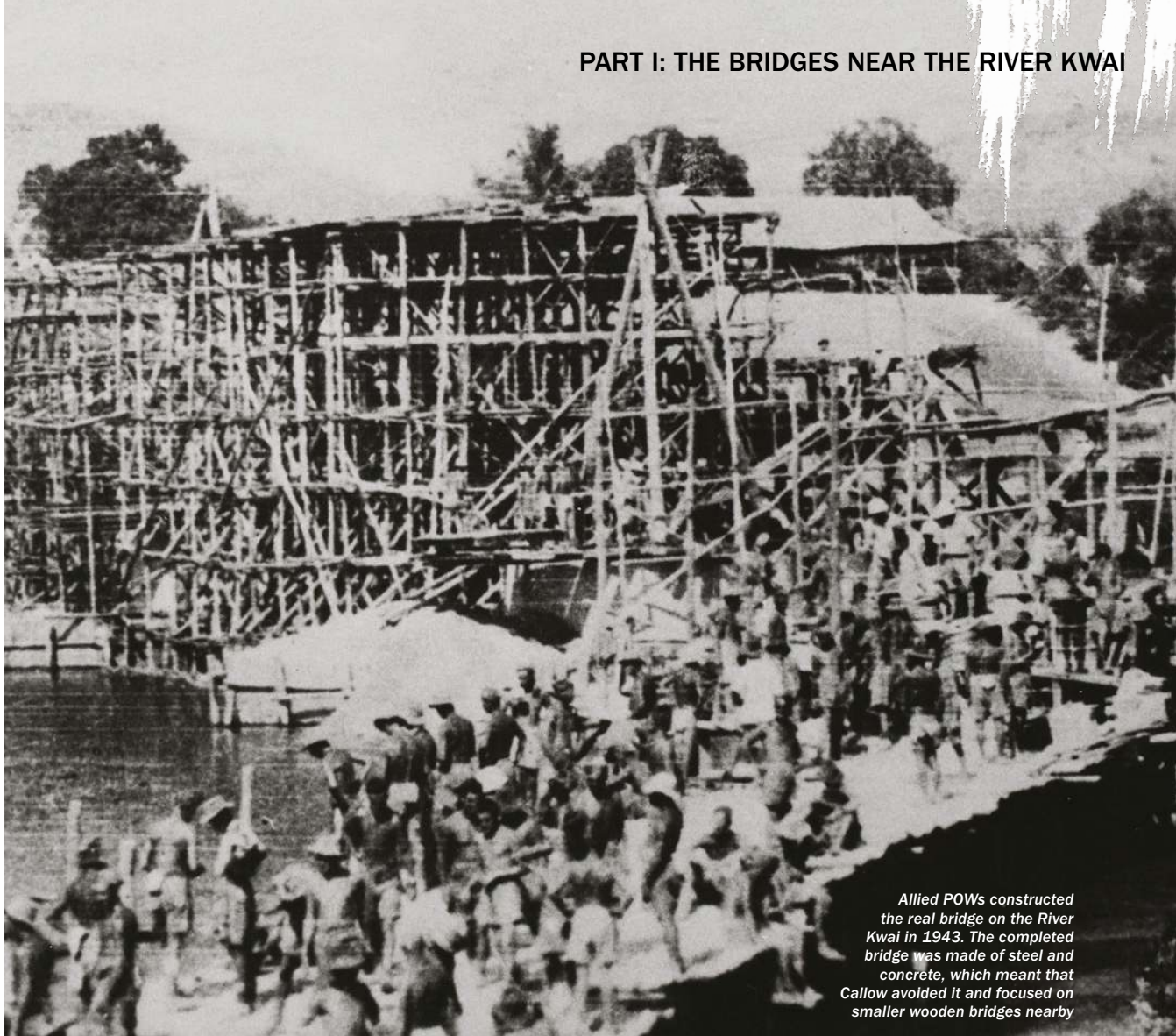




Lieutenant Robert Callow (code-named 'Longshanks') in Ceylon during his commando service, August 1944. The badge above his right lapel pocket proved that he had earned his 'wings' as a paratrooper



Two British soldiers patrol through the ruins of Bahe in central Burma during the campaign of 1944-45



Allied POWs constructed the real bridge on the River Kwai in 1943. The completed bridge was made of steel and concrete, which meant that Callow avoided it and focused on smaller wooden bridges nearby

useful area of expertise. With his skills in explosives and languages Callow was an ideal choice, and he was personally selected in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) by Major General Adrian Carton de Wiart VC.

Callow recalled, "Adrian Carton de Wiart actually selected us in Ceylon and we were chosen for our skills. Mine were explosives, languages and paramedics. Carton de Wiart interviewed us when I was in the medical college and took one of us who each had different skills. He introduced us all and then recommended us."

Carton de Wiart was a legend of the British Army who, among other things, had fought in the Boer War and won a Victoria Cross at the Battle of the Somme. By the end of World War I he had been wounded eight times, including the loss of an eye and a hand. Even during World War II he had been captured and held prisoner by the Italians and made five escape attempts before he was repatriated in 1943. Nevertheless, Callow knew comparatively little about the heavily scarred man who wore an eye-patch and selected him for commando service. "I only met him very briefly but he was quite a character, and I didn't realise quite how important he was at the time."

Once he was selected to serve in Force 136, Callow joined small teams that would be flown into enemy-occupied Burma to carry out acts of sabotage against Japanese forces behind enemy lines. The nature of Force 136's work

## "CALLOW JOINED SMALL TEAMS THAT WOULD BE FLOWN INTO ENEMY-OCCUPIED BURMA TO CARRY OUT ACTS OF SABOTAGE AGAINST JAPANESE FORCES BEHIND ENEMY LINES"

was so secretive that Callow didn't even know the names of his colleagues. "We didn't know each other, but we had to adapt to each other. One was an artilleryman and another in signals so each one was busy with his three skills, which in my case were explosives, languages and paramedics. The only man I knew there was 'Geordie' because we were both in the OCTU [Officer Cadet Training Unit] but I didn't know his full name because we didn't use real names. We used pseudonyms, and mine was 'Longshanks'. You couldn't use your real name because if you were captured and tortured by the Japanese you couldn't give away any other information about other people."

### Baptism of fire

After months of training, Callow was ready to begin active operations in late 1943. His first mission was to be airdropped over the

River Tenasserim in southeast Burma to blow up Japanese machine gun towers at a large prisoner of war camp. Flying in a long-range B-24 Liberator, Callow was part of a six-man team, and he was the last to jump. "We were flying in overnight. We had a major in charge of us, and I had the explosives in a kitbag and was going to jump last, which is what I did."

Despite all his training, chance meant that the mission went wrong immediately. "It was just before dawn when we arrived and the major jumped, but he jumped too soon. He landed on the west side of the river, and I jumped too. Nobody wanted to be near me with all the explosives but there was a mist on the river. I don't think it was deliberate but there was a Japanese patrol on the ground on the east side and they saw us coming down. They couldn't see me because I was above the mist of the cloud but the major landed and was seen."

Once Callow's commanding officer had been spotted chaos ensued. "The Japanese all fired and I could see their tracers. It was like a white hosepipe of fire coming up and it hit Geordie. He got blown in half because he had detonators and high explosives around his waist and they were triggered. His legs fell away and that was the last time I saw Geordie. I had to write to his parents afterwards and say that I'd seen him die and that he'd died painlessly."

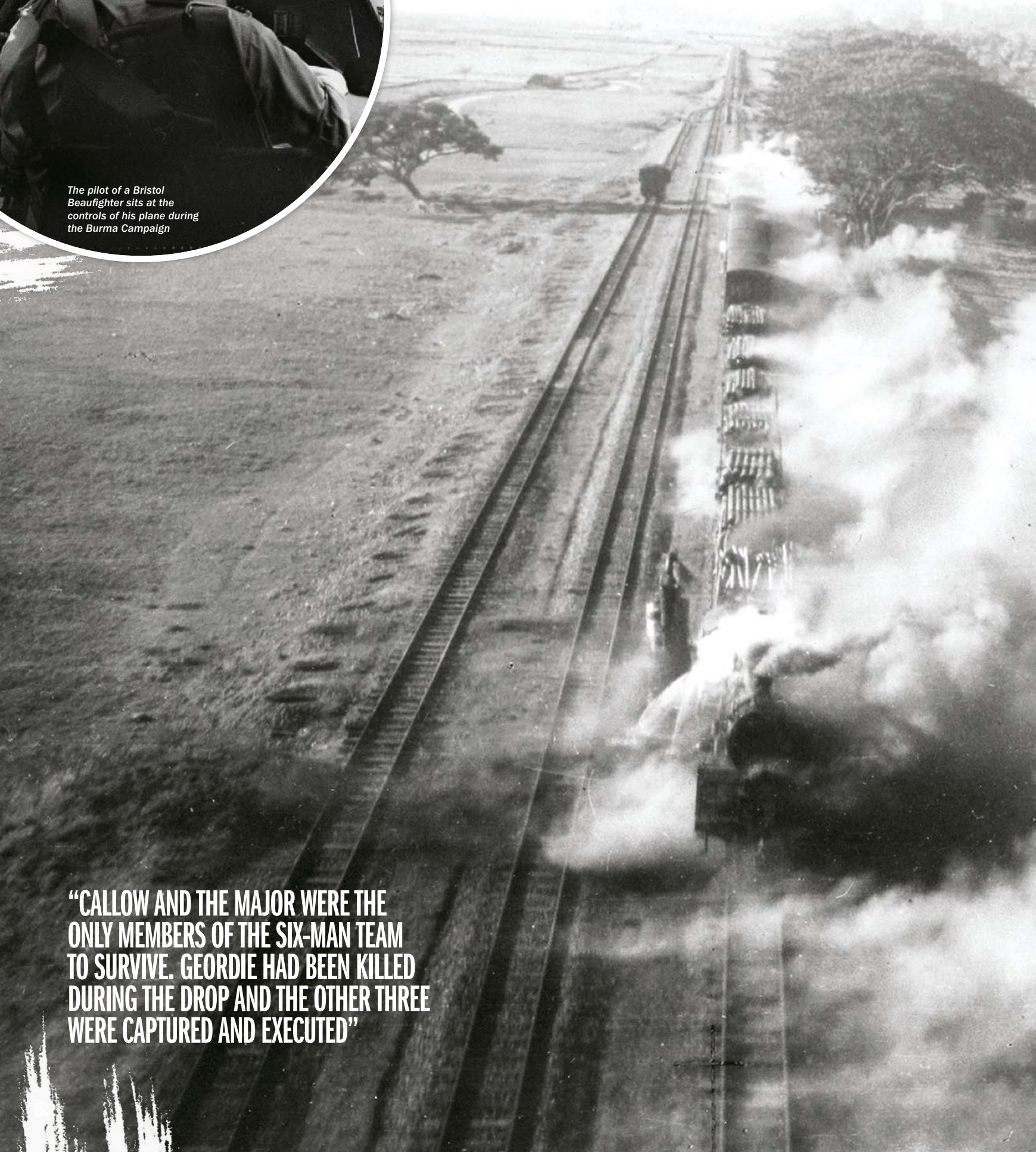
Under this level of fire the mission was over before it had begun, and Callow now had to focus on survival by hiding from the enemy. "I





The pilot of a Bristol Beaufighter sits at the controls of his plane during the Burma Campaign

As well as ground commando attacks; Japanese railways in Burma were also attacked by Allied aircraft. This photograph depicts the aftermath of a strafing attack by an RAF Bristol Beaufighter in December 1944



**“CALLOW AND THE MAJOR WERE THE ONLY MEMBERS OF THE SIX-MAN TEAM TO SURVIVE. GEORDIE HAD BEEN KILLED DURING THE DROP AND THE OTHER THREE WERE CAPTURED AND EXECUTED”**

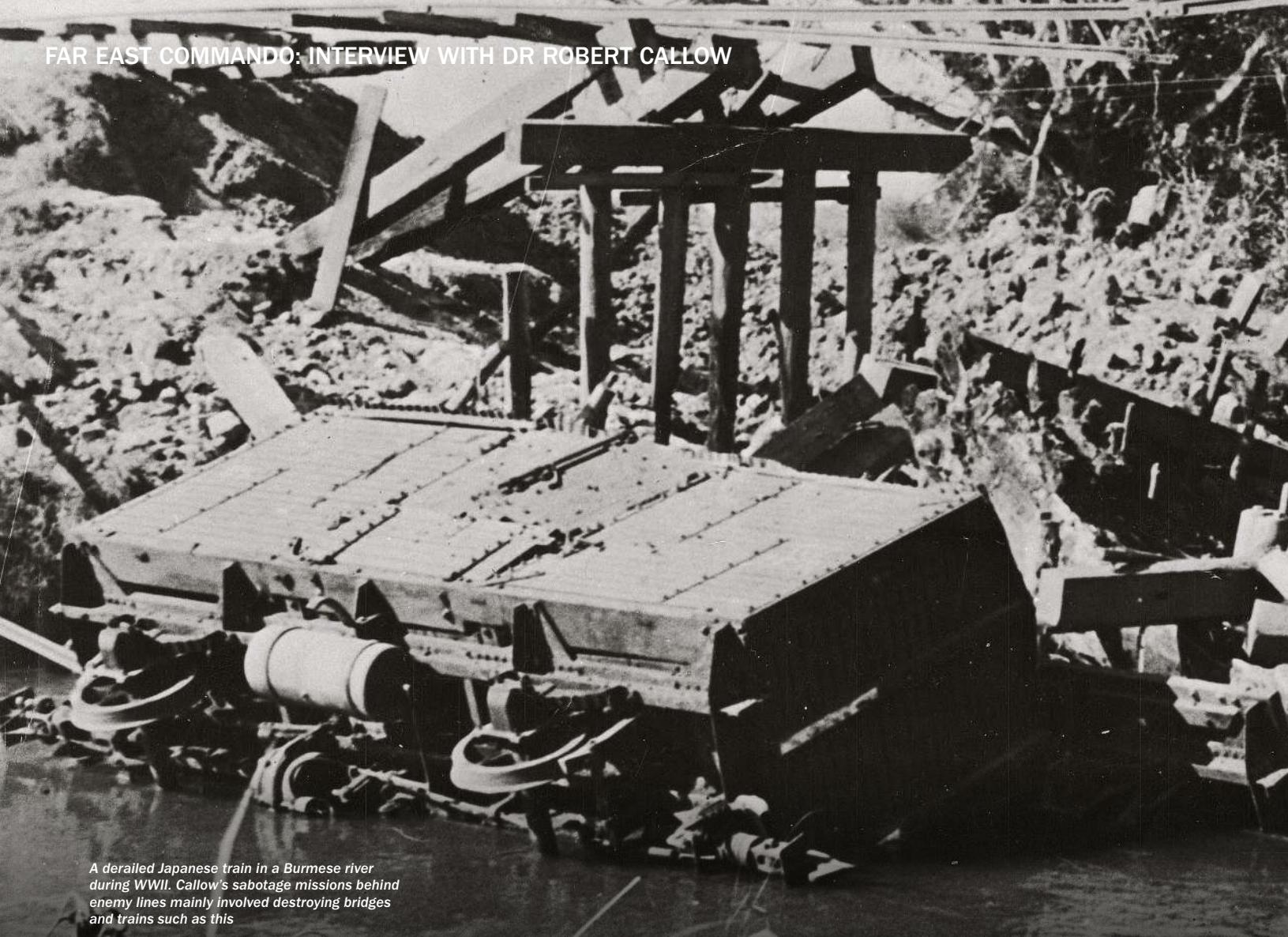




*Right: A Bristol Beaufighter is loaded with a rocket for an attack on targets in Burma, including bridges and trains*







A derailed Japanese train in a Burmese river during WWII. Callow's sabotage missions behind enemy lines mainly involved destroying bridges and trains such as this

went into the river, struck my chute, got rid of my explosives and landed in the mist. I swam ashore and realised that the Japanese would be all over looking for me, so I used my knife to dig into the bank like *The Wind in the Willows*! I made a hole and stayed there for days because the Japanese were looking for me up above before I came out."

Callow was in a perilous situation and had to implement the skills his training and natural resourcefulness had equipped him with. "There was nothing you could do, and you had to use your brain. I had my rations for two days, but then when I thought it was safe in the mist I'd swim out and get terrapins. They were terrible to eat raw and you couldn't cook, so I was sucking the juice out of them."

After several days hiding in the river bank Callow made his escape. "After a few days I decided that the Japanese had stopped looking for me so I came out, found the track and started going westwards towards the coast. I then heard some people coming and so I hid and got my knife ready to kill, but in fact it was my major bringing two of the special forces who didn't belong to us: an Australian and an American from the SOE and OSS [Office of Strategic Services]. They were teak planters and were living there on a plantation, but the Japanese never got to them. They took us out and it was about 40 miles [64 kilometres]."

Callow and the major were the only members of the original six-man team to survive. Geordie

## **"WE WAITED UNTIL THE TRAIN WAS GOING OVER AND THE LOCOMOTIVE, DRIVER, TRUCKS AND EVERYTHING ELSE WOULD GO DOWN WITH THE BRIDGE BECAUSE THEY WERE ALL CARRYING THE AMMUNITION"**

had been killed during the drop and the other three were captured and executed.

### **Blowing up bridges**

Callow's first mission had been a horrific experience, but he went on to carry out many covert operations against the Japanese in Burma. Often working with Indian troops, he was tasked with disrupting Japanese communication lines and supply chains by blowing up bridges in the jungle. "They didn't have any external supplies like food or medical supplies except ammunition so we would make sure they would run out by bringing down the wooden bridges."

Destroying bridges was a routine operation and although Callow's thoughts on these dangerous missions are understated, the odds

were alarming. "All we did was hide in the jungle, prepare some explosives on a railway and waited for a train to come along and blow it. There were 134,000 Japanese in Burma compared to around 100,000 of us [British] but I didn't know that at the time.

Callow remembered that blowing up Japanese bridges required specific explosives and delicate timing: "We mostly used nitroglycerine on the bridges, which would make a cutting explosion. We would put it onto the wooden supports and once it was detonated it would take the supports away from the train. We waited until the train was going over and the locomotive, driver, trucks and everything else would go down with the bridge because they were all carrying the ammunition."

Operations like this would later be immortalised in the 1957 film *The Bridge on the River Kwai* but Callow is scathing about its historical accuracy: "The film was a load of rubbish because we would blow up all the little wooden ones. The real bridge on the River Kwai was a big steel and concrete structure and the Americans nearly blew themselves up bombing it from 1,000 feet [305 metres]. Groups of six people would blow up the wooden bridges around it, and that's what we were doing by dropping the trains full of ammunition into the water and blowing them up. We couldn't blow up a big steel, concrete bridge like that."

Force 136's attacks against enemy bridges was prolific and Callow lost count of how



**“REMARKABLY THE MINES THAT HE HELPED TO PLANT WOULD LATER SEVERELY WOUND HIM AFTER THE WAR”**

*British troops at a base in the Burmese jungle. Note that the soldiers wear trousers and not shorts to prevent being bitten by deadly lice*



*Above: Soldiers of the Japanese 15th Army on the border of Burma during the invasion of 1942*

many he destroyed. “I couldn’t put an approximate number on how many bridges we blew up, it was a case of whenever we could we did. We hid from the enemy in the jungle, and if we came across any bridge then we hid there, came out at night, put out the explosives, blew it and then got the hell out.”

Callow’s expertise in explosives meant that he was also adept at creating craters on roads against travelling enemy convoys. “You’d dig and bore a hole about 12 feet [3.7 metres] deep, put some amatol in at the bottom and then blow it to form a chamber. Then you put black powder in that, place a fuse in there (both safety and electric) and when you’re ready you choose your time to blow it up. Depending

on what you were doing you could make craters for blowing up roads instantly. Otherwise we’d wait until there was some transport coming and you blew it up then.”

Despite the dangerous nature of his work Callow never had many feelings about successful operations. “It was just the sense of a job well done, we didn’t have any emotions about it. We were just glad to be out of it and alive.”

In addition to his sabotage operations, Callow played a part sinking German U-boats en route to Japan after a mission. “They sent us a flying boat from Calcutta. When we got to the coast the American and the Australian had recruited the local pirates to spy on the Japanese. The pirates found that German U-boats were coming down through the Straits of Malacca. They had

## EXTREME JUNGLE RATIONS

DURING THE BURMA CAMPAIGN ROBERT CALLOW HAD TO RELY ON UNUSUAL SOURCES OF FOOD TO STAY NOURISHED WHILE ON MISSIONS

The Burma Campaign was noted for the development of frequent airdrops to supply Allied soldiers while on active service. Robert Callow’s men primarily received drops of rice, but cooking conditions were extremely primitive. “Our troops were Indian so we also cooked chapattis on our steel helmets. If you took the lining out

of a steel helmet and put it over a wood fire you could fry a chapatti on top of it. But of course you couldn’t do that when there was any of the enemy there.”

Callow also frequently had to find alternative sources of food behind enemy lines. “The Japanese ate the local food and lived off the jungle, which we also had to do in the end.

We mostly ate rats: not the sewer rats though, these are jungle rats. The rats used to run along the palm trees and eat the palm oil so we ate them because their flesh was very tasty. Also, the snakes used to go up after the rats so we caught the snakes as well.”

In these severe circumstances Callow was not picky. “I had no

favourite between snake and rat, they were all the same: it was like choosing between fish. There were certain things that you couldn’t eat like turtles’ heads but we would eat anything.” However, some animals remained unappealing. “Monkeys’ paws were the worst because they were like babies’ hands. It was like eating your own hand.”

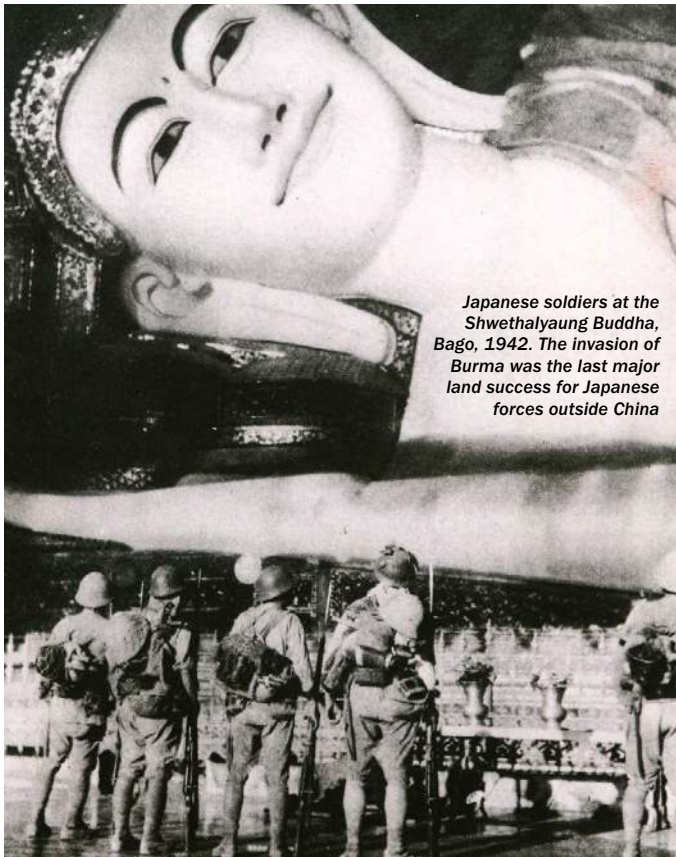




**“THE JUNGLE WAS A PARTICULARLY HARSH ENVIRONMENT TO FIGHT IN, BUT CALLOW FELT THAT HIS TRAINING HAD ADEQUATELY PREPARED HIM”**

*An Allied soldier hides in the Burmese jungle. For commandos such as Callow the dense jungle provided ideal cover to hide from the Japanese during sabotage missions*

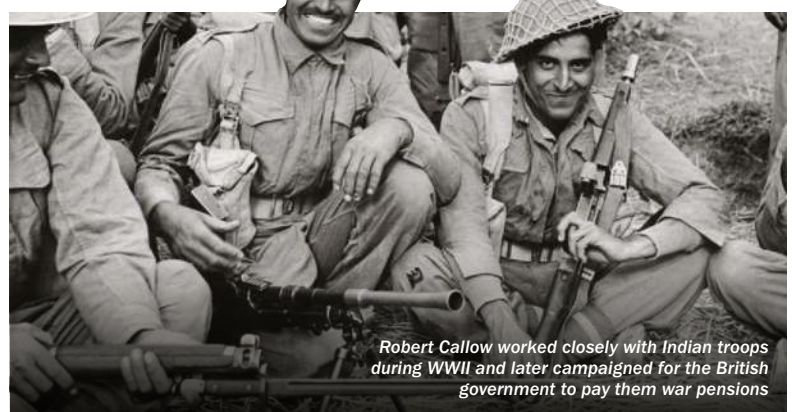




Japanese soldiers at the Shwethalyaung Buddha, Bago, 1942. The invasion of Burma was the last major land success for Japanese forces outside China



Soldiers of the Japanese Burma Area Army fire a heavy machine gun. Callow respected the fighting abilities of the Japanese but despised the Koreans who abused Allied POWs



Robert Callow worked closely with Indian troops during WWII and later campaigned for the British government to pay them war pensions

German engineers in them who had invented the V1 and V2 rockets and they were sending them on to Japan to carry on [the war]. The Germans realised that things were going badly for them by this time and they were building up Japan with all these things. This was late 1944 and they were doing this already."

This vital piece of intelligence had to be relayed to Allied authorities and Callow made one of the calls. "The pirates reported this to the American and Australian and they then told me. I got onto our radioman in Ceylon and he went in to get mines planted near an island off Malaysia to stop them. We sunk about 12 U-boats afterwards." Callow maintains that his role during this incident was "wheels within wheels" but remarkably the mines that he helped to plant would later severely wound him after the war.

### Jungle warfare

The jungle was a particularly harsh environment to fight in, but Callow felt that his training had adequately prepared him for operating there. "It had taken a long time going out on the ship to India and by the time I got into the jungle, that was about nine months later, so we had quite a bit of time to adapt."

Nevertheless, conditions were harsh. "It rained all the time. Humidity was often 100 per cent and you'd sleep on the mud. We wore trousers because it was wet as hell and if you wore shorts you could be bitten by deadly lice." Callow would find that the experience of commando operations was ultimately dehumanising. "You have no

choice and it's all excitement. You're like an animal and you're living like one. If there was a leaf that looked wrong it alerted you, if you heard a sound that was not right you were up and awake and ready to fight."

Even 70 years later Callow's training can still cause problems. "It becomes a snag. I was in hospital a few weeks ago when they did my leg in an operation. Afterwards, I had a nightmare and pulled the hair and ears of one of the nurses because I thought I was being attacked. It never leaves you, and this is dangerous. I felt terrible and was really apologetic to the nurse, but they'd seen lots like me. I didn't know that instinct was still there, but it's survival."

Despite the ferocious nature of the campaign and contrary to what many other Allied soldiers felt, Callow did not hate the Japanese. "I respected them because they were very good soldiers. They were killers of course and we would kill them, which we did. Out of 134,000 there were only 25,000 left afterwards."

Instead, Callow held the Koreans who served in the Japanese forces with contempt. "The Japanese had Korea as their subsidiary. They put the Korean women into brothels for the Japanese soldiers and they made the men into prisoner of war guards. The men I mostly blew up were Koreans. They were not fighting men, and that's why I had no compunction about killing them, because of the way they treated POWs and everyone else – they ill-treated everybody. It's also why the Japanese ill-treated the Koreans – they didn't trust them."

The brutality of the Japanese forces during World War II is well known and Callow vividly remembered the human cost of the Burma Campaign. "We had one in four casualties. We lost 26,000 men and there were 100,000 of us. There were also 330,000 Indians and they also lost one man in four, which is about 86,000, and then the bloody War Office wouldn't give them any pensions! But we made the [British] government pay them eventually."

Far away from the Burmese jungle events were changing rapidly. On 8 May 1945 Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Allies in Europe, but VE Day had no effect on the war in the Far East because the Japanese refused to surrender. Consequently, the bloodshed continued in Burma. Callow recalled, "Churchill declared VE Day in Europe in May 1945 but we lost 4,000 men between May and August." In fact, Robert Callow's experiences in Burma were only the beginning of a unique military career.

## IN PART II...

Robert Callow recalls blowing up a mountain, running a camp for Japanese prisoners, surviving a sea mine explosion and meeting Chairman Mao's right-hand man. Issue 51 is on sale 25 January 2018. Visit [MyFavouriteMagazines.com](http://MyFavouriteMagazines.com) to subscribe and save money on the cover price!

Dr Robert Callow is the Welfare Officer for the Coventry branch of the Burma Star Association that is part of the British Legion, the United Kingdom's largest armed forces charity. It upholds the memory of the fallen and provides lifelong support for the Armed Forces community, including serving men and women, veterans and their families. For more information visit: [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)



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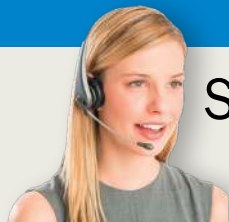

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# THE WEST AFRICA SQUADRON

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In 1807 Britain declared war on the slave trade, and a small fleet of Royal Navy ships formed the frontline

**I**n the early hours of 1 February 1829 the Spanish slaver *El Almirante* turned to face the Royal Navy ship that had been pursuing it doggedly for the past 31 hours. Bigger than its opponent and carrying 14 guns as opposed to the British ship's single 18-pounder, the Spanish vessel had every chance of fighting its way to freedom. The fate of the 466 slaves on board

*El Almirante* hung in the balance, as *HMS Black Joke* closed in under unusually calm weather conditions, resorting to oars to get within range of its prey.

A short, fierce firefight broke out, and over the course of 80 minutes *El Almirante* suffered 28 casualties, including the death of its captain. The Spanish ship had become another victim of one of the West Africa Squadron's

most effective ships, which was somewhat ironic – the *Black Joke* had started life as a slaver, and its speed had originally been intended to evade the British vessels aiming to stamp out the slave trade.

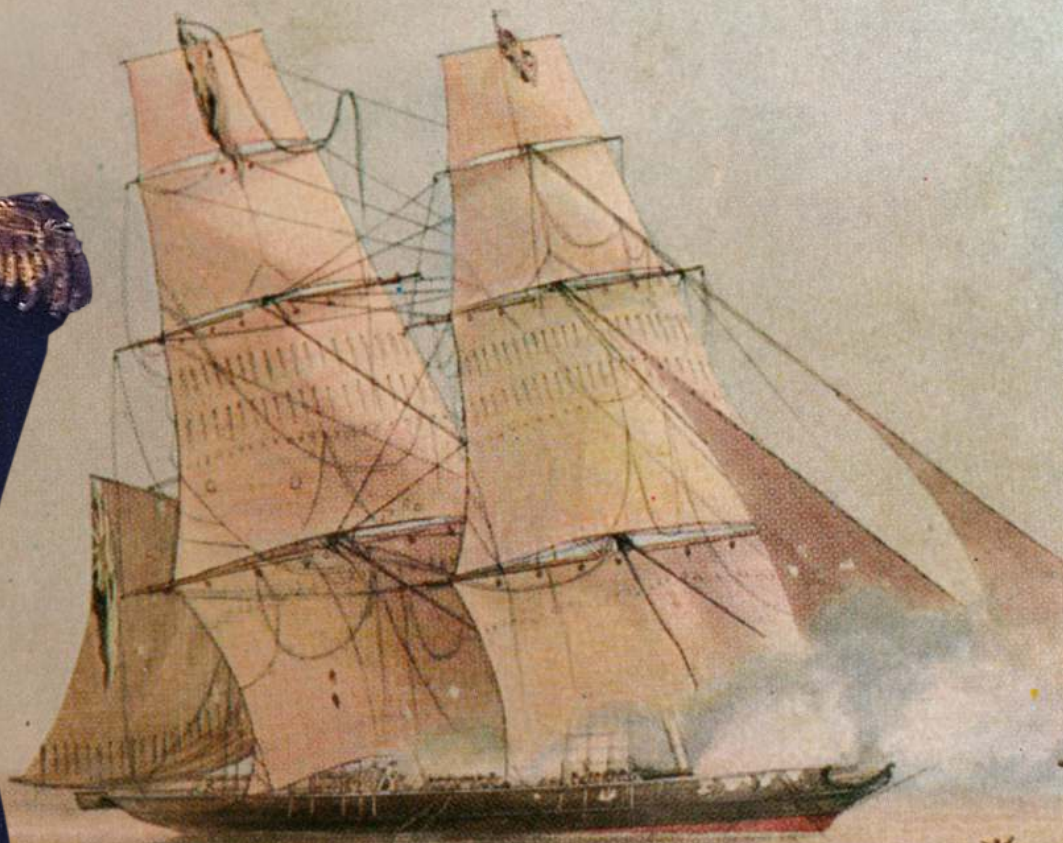
### Abolition and war

Britain's decision to abolish slavery has been described as "the most expensive

*Sir George Ralph Collier, the first commodore of the West Africa Squadron*

**"BRITAIN'S DECISION TO ABOLISH SLAVERY HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS 'THE MOST EXPENSIVE INTERNATIONAL MORAL EFFORT IN MODERN WORLD HISTORY'"**

*HMS Black Joke (left) engages the Spanish slaver El Almirante, capturing the ship and freeing the 466 slaves on board*



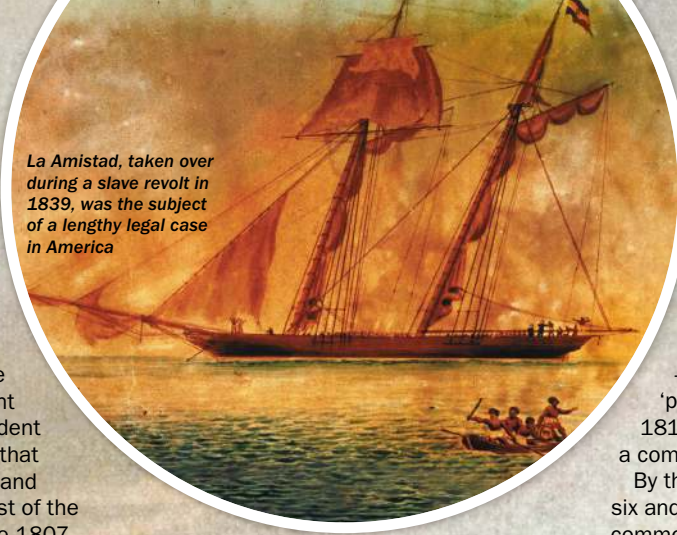


## THE WEST AFRICA SQUADRON

international moral effort in modern world history". It came at the end of an era in which British ships had carried more than half of the slaves taken from Africa's west coast, transporting them to the British West Indies, the United States and destinations in South America. Britain's sugar-producing colonies in the West Indies, which produced 55 per cent of the world's sugar, were totally dependent on slave labour. It's little wonder, then, that when Britain passed two acts, in 1806 and 1807, to abolish the slave trade, the rest of the world was suspicious of its motives. The 1807 act made it illegal for slaves to be imported to British West Indian colonies, banned British citizens from involvement in the trade and forbade British ports from accepting foreign slave ships.

Britain was not the first European power to ban the trade – Denmark had done so in 1792 and revolutionary France had briefly outlawed it in 1794, only to reinstate it in 1802 under Napoleon (which did much to invigorate the anti-

*La Amistad, taken over during a slave revolt in 1839, was the subject of a lengthy legal case in America*



slavery movement in Britain). Neither Denmark nor France, however, were in a position to make as much impact as Britain.

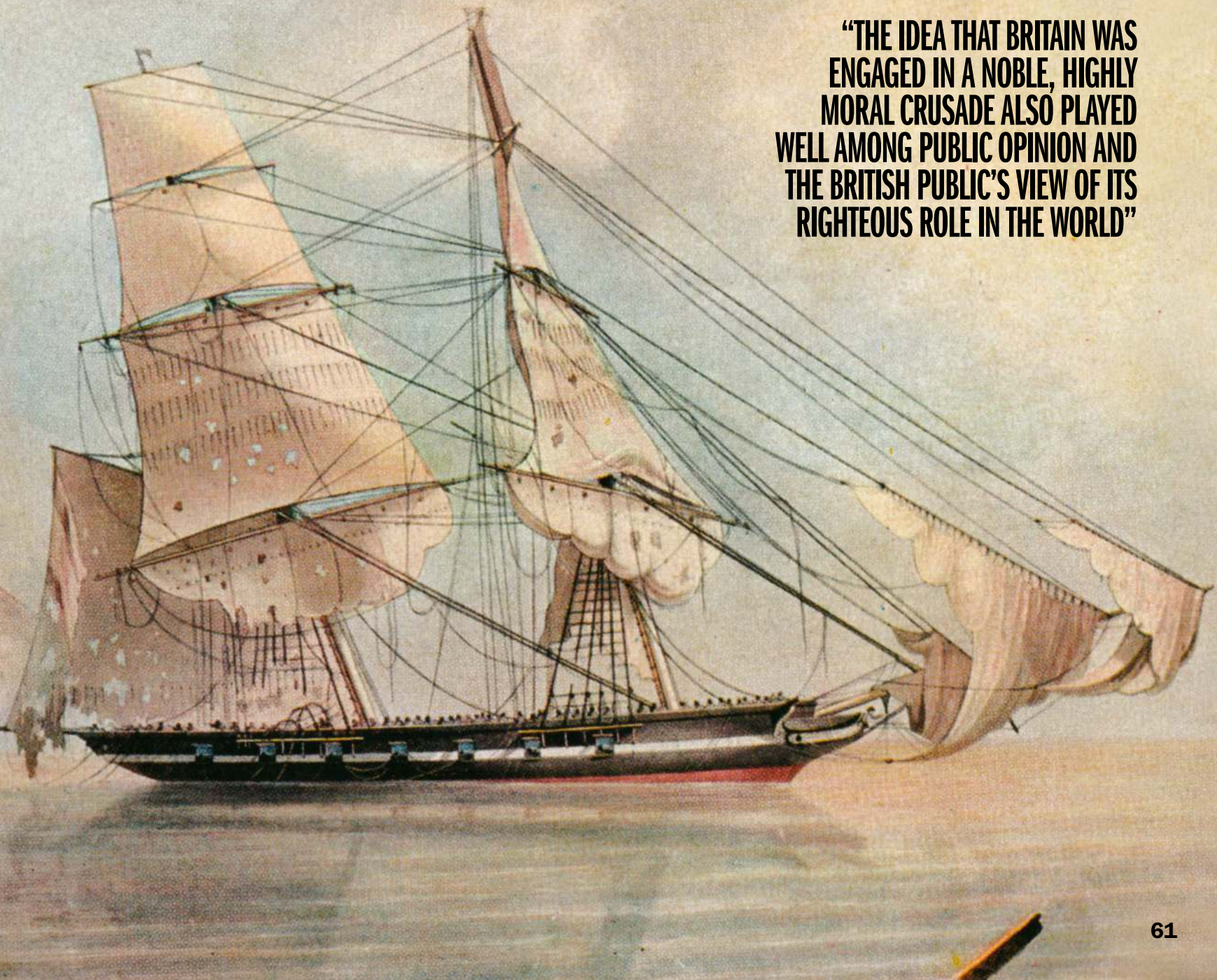
When Britain unilaterally abolished the slave trade, war in Europe had been raging for years, first against the forces of revolutionary France and then Napoleon. With the navy therefore engaged in a major conflict, when the decision was made to first send ships to

patrol the west coast of Africa for slavers it was a pathetically small force. The frigate HMS Solebay and sloop HMS Derwent were all that could be spared by a navy straining to maintain control of the seaways of Europe. This two-ship force was not yet the famed West Africa Squadron – the ships were classed as being on 'particular service' and it was not until 1819 that an independent command, under a commodore, was established.

By then the number of ships had risen to six and Sir George Collier became the first commodore of the West Africa Squadron. An experienced seaman, having fought in the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 against the United States, his flagship was the 36-gun HMS Creole.

The size of the squadron fluctuated over the half-century of its existence, hitting a peak of 30 in 1847 but was more usually somewhere in the teens. It was never enough to effectively patrol the vast area that encompassed the slave routes, but some help came in 1841,

**“THE IDEA THAT BRITAIN WAS ENGAGED IN A NOBLE, HIGHLY MORAL CRUSADE ALSO PLAYED WELL AMONG PUBLIC OPINION AND THE BRITISH PUBLIC’S VIEW OF ITS RIGHTEOUS ROLE IN THE WORLD”**





## THE WEST AFRICA SQUADRON

when HMS Pluto joined the squadron, armed with up to four guns. It was the first paddle steamer to take part in patrols and could maintain a high speed under calm conditions and steam up inlets and rivers, making it an effective pursuit vessel. By 1852 there were ten steamers on station.

The ships of the squadron were generally a far cry from the heavily armed men-of-war that made up the front line of the Royal Navy. Anti-slavery work was more a matter of speed, but the activities of the patrols still captured the imagination of the British public. Stirring tales of pursuits and battles with slavers found their way into the newspapers and were immortalised in oil paintings. The idea that Britain was engaged in a noble, highly moral crusade also played well among public opinion and the British public's view of its righteous role in the world.

### A resilient trade

The fact remained that, with such a small number of ships, little impression could be made on the slave trade. Diplomacy had to be employed as well and was arguably more effective. During the Congress of Vienna, which began in November 1814, the map of post-war

Europe was redrawn (Napoleon's brief reappearance and defeat at Waterloo ultimately made little impact on the negotiations).

Britain's representative, Viscount Castlereagh, was determined to also secure declarations of support for Britain's anti-slavery stance. His counterparts from the other powers at the congress commented that he was sometimes hamstrung in negotiations because of his insistence on pushing through anti-slavery measures, although Castlereagh himself referred to it as "a rather minor detail". His efforts bore fruit – France agreed to abolish the slave trade within five years, while Spain and Portugal made less definitive promises to move towards abolition.

Despite this, slave ships could easily switch their flag to that of a nation that still supported the trade, and many of them were sleeker and faster than the often old and battered Royal Navy ships that patrolled against them.

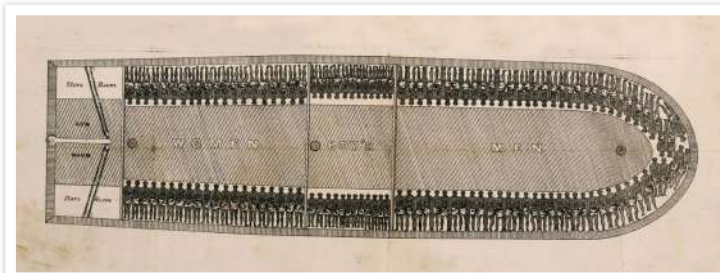
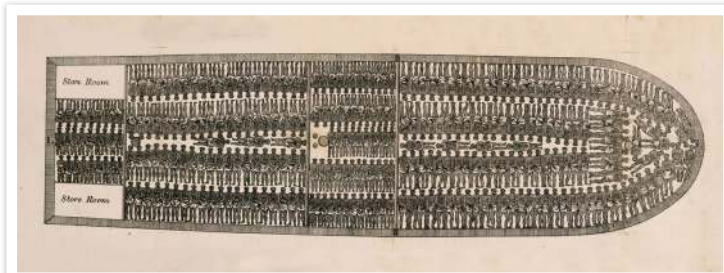
The economic imperative also ensured that slavery remained very much an active business. A steep decline in Britain's share of the sugar market was down to the fact that slave labour enabled cheaper production, and



**Above:** Leopold Heath (pictured as an admiral in 1873), took part in the attack on Lagos and later served on the east coast of Africa

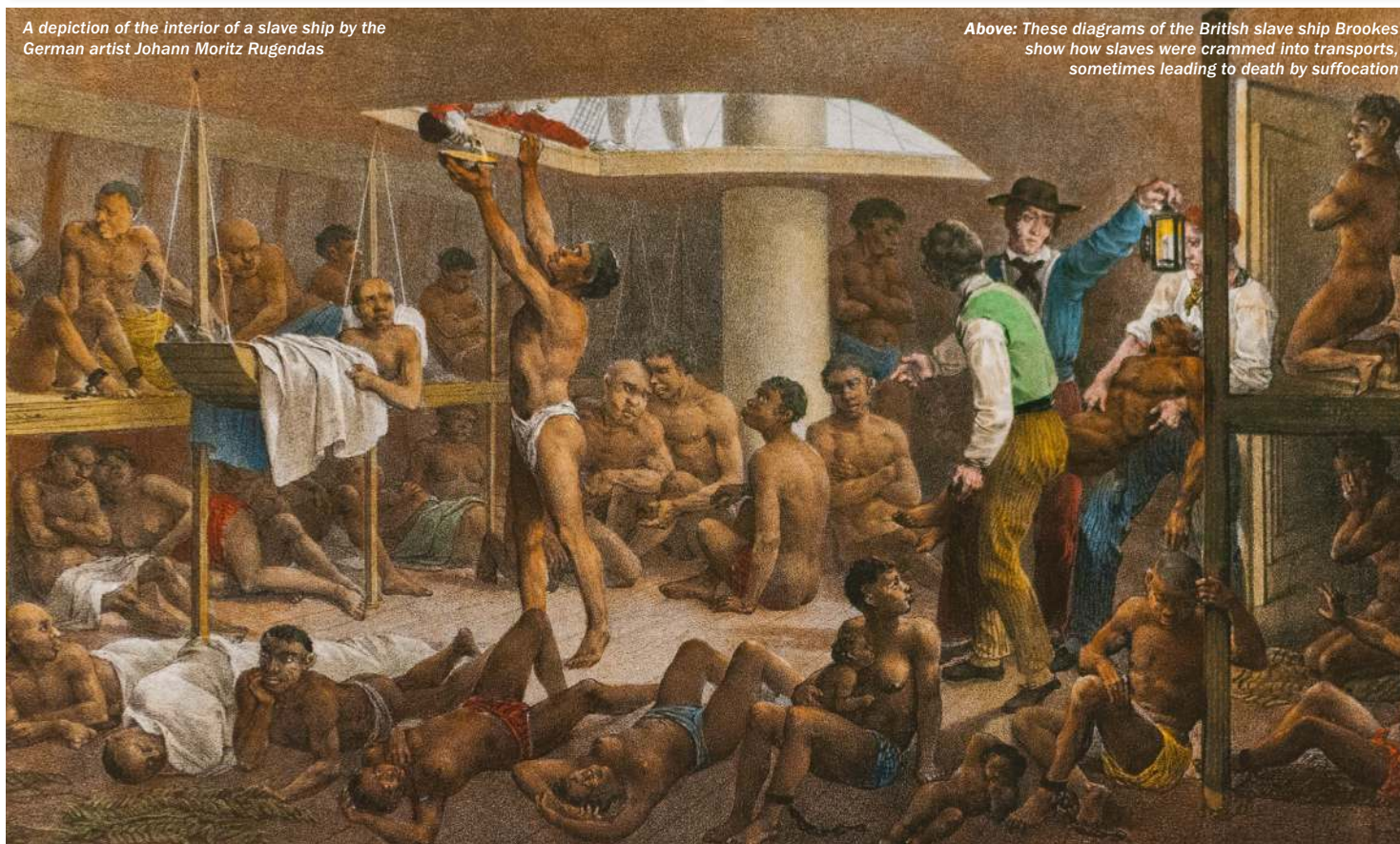
British plantations could no longer compete on a level playing field. There were plenty of nations willing to fill the gap.

Between 1811 and 1850 an average of half a million slaves were transported across the Atlantic every decade and, until rules were tightened, a slaver in danger of being captured could simply jettison its cargo of living people



**A depiction of the interior of a slave ship by the German artist Johann Moritz Rugendas**

**Above:** These diagrams of the British slave ship *Brookes* show how slaves were crammed into transports, sometimes leading to death by suffocation





**“SLAVE SHIPS COULD EASILY SWITCH THEIR FLAG TO THAT OF A NATION THAT STILL SUPPORTED THE TRADE, AND MANY OF THEM WERE SLEEKER AND FASTER THAN THE ROYAL NAVY SHIPS”**

to avoid seizure. Against this, the West Africa Squadron liberated an estimated 150,000 slaves over the five decades of its existence.

Against the odds, the squadron doggedly pursued its mission and scored some notable successes. Encounters had an unusually personal touch – rather than fleets engaging, as had often been the case during the Napoleonic Wars, these were single-ship clashes with all the glamour of a prize fight. Pickle versus Voladora, Buzzard versus Formidable and Acorn versus Gabriel were contests that fired the public imagination. The reality of life on

the West Africa station, riven with disease, blighted by boredom and often marked by the frustration of simply being unable to catch the speedy slave ships, was in marked contrast to the excitement that played out in the pages of the popular press, but public support was important if the effort was to be maintained.

**Gunboat diplomacy**

The reluctance of many powers to do more than talk about ending the slave trade and the outright refusal of many others to do even that left Britain in a quandary. There were limits to the level of persuasion and coercion that could be applied to powerful nations such as France and the United States.

The case was very different with African peoples who refused to toe the line. Punitive raids could be mounted in the coastal regions of West Africa to bring rebellious leaders to heel. In 1850 the Zaro, living near Sierra Leone, struck out against the British decree, declaring war on neighbouring peoples who had agreed to end their trade in slaves. The six-gun brig HMS Heroine, patrolling the shoreline near the Gallinas River, dispatched a tiny expeditionary force of sailors and marines to deal with the situation. Together with men from allied tribes,

they hunted down a Zaro raiding party and obliterated it at the small town of Siman.

The following year a larger expedition was mounted against the oba (king) of Lagos. Britain had decided to try its familiar (and often successful) colonial tactic of pitting rival tribal leaders against each other by threatening to support Oba Kosoko's enemies if he did not agree to suspend his slave-trading. This was in essence merely a pretext for asserting British dominance in the region. The message was to be delivered by a diplomat, John Beecroft, but would have the weight of the West Africa Squadron behind it.

No fewer than five Royal Navy ships had gathered off the coast, providing the men for a formidable expedition. It approached Kosoko's stronghold under cover of a white flag, but the show of strength was provocative. A fleet of 22 small boats carrying around 300 sailors, marines and West African 'Kroomen' (experienced and respected sailors from the Kru coast), descended on Lagos and were met with ferocious resistance. The landing quickly became a debacle and the British were forced to withdraw.

Kosoko was then threatened with a naval bombardment if he refused to surrender, a

# THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

SHIPS OF THE WEST AFRICA SQUADRON HAD AN ENORMOUS AREA OF COASTLINE TO PATROL AND AN EVEN VASTER OCEAN BEYOND THAT

**THE BRITISH WEST INDIES**

Slavery was a vital component of the sugar plantations in the British West Indies, and the abolition of slavery greatly reduced Britain's share of the global sugar market.

**SIERRA LEONE**

An experimental colony set up in the aftermath of the American War of Independence, Sierra Leone became an official Crown colony in 1808. Its capital Freetown became an important naval base in the fight against slavery, and many liberated slaves chose to settle in the area.

**CUBA**

Havana was an important port in the slave trade and was the destination of the El Almirante when she was intercepted and run down by the converted slaver Black Joke in 1829.

**THE REDUCTION OF LAGOS**

The site of power for the rebellious Oba Kosoko, Lagos was bombarded by British forces at the end of 1851. The deposed king was able to escape and even returned in 1861, after the annexation of Lagos.

**THE SLAVE COAST**

As with the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast, this region was named after its principal export. Focused on the Bight (or Bay) of Benin, an estimated 2-3 million slaves were transported from the region before the slave trade was finally stamped out.

**ANGOLA**

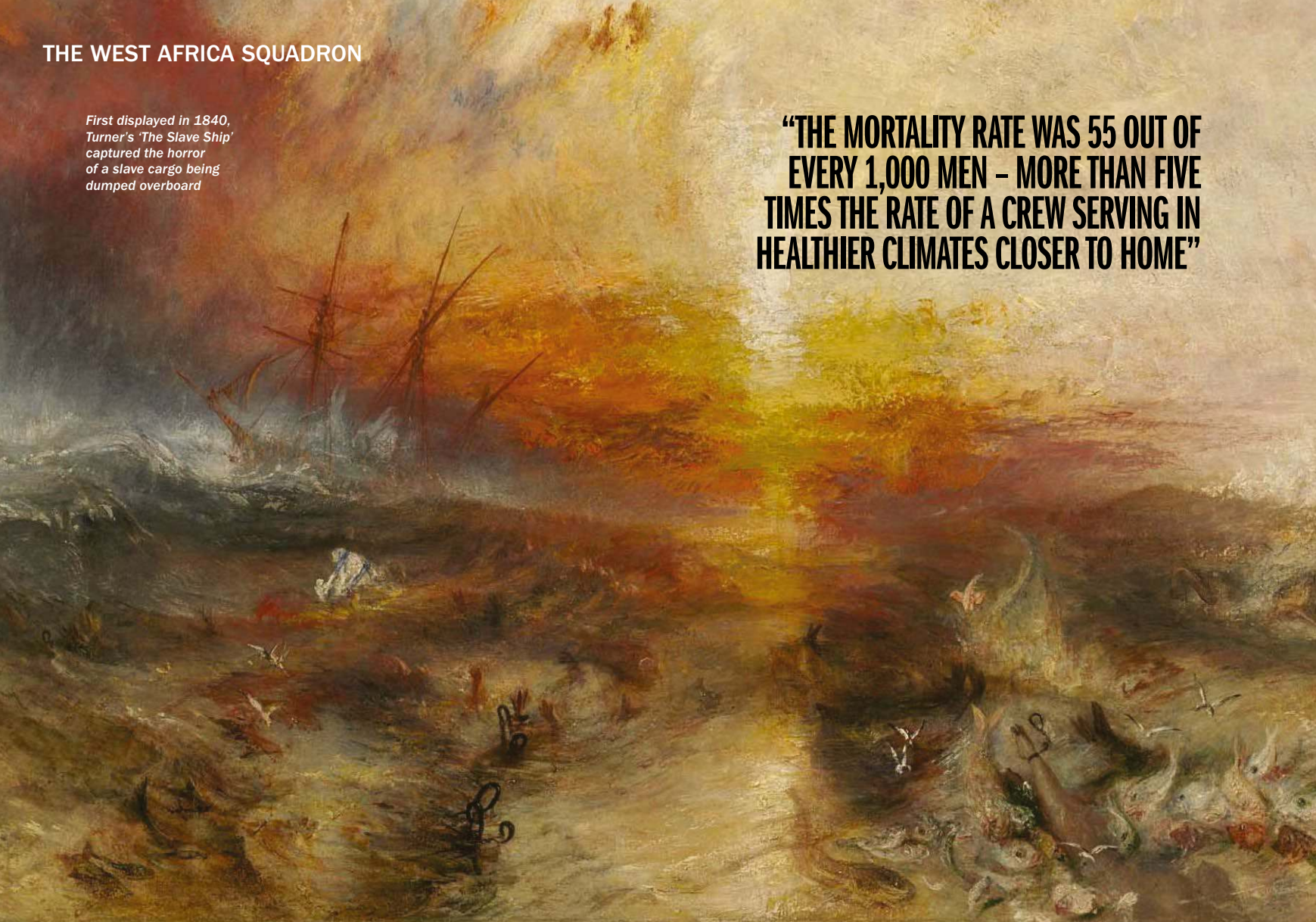
A prolific area in the slave trade, slaves from this region were transported to the West Indies as well as North and South America. An estimated 37 per cent of slaves in North America originated in Angola.

**“FREETOWN BECAME AN IMPORTANT NAVAL BASE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY, AND MANY LIBERATED SLAVES CHOSE TO SETTLE IN THE AREA”**



First displayed in 1840, Turner's 'The Slave Ship' captured the horror of a slave cargo being dumped overboard

**“THE MORTALITY RATE WAS 55 OUT OF EVERY 1,000 MEN – MORE THAN FIVE TIMES THE RATE OF A CREW SERVING IN HEALTHIER CLIMATES CLOSER TO HOME”**



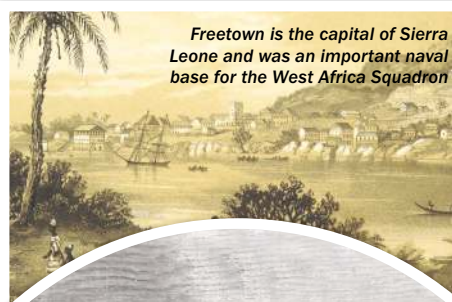
threat that was carried out on 26 December 1851. Kosoko was forced to flee two days later and the following month his replacement, Oba Akitoye, signed a treaty with Britain to end the slave trade in the region.

## The tide turns

Such strong-arm tactics could not work with the major powers, but gradually global opinion shifted against slavery. France emancipated its slaves in 1848, Brazil began enforcing its own ban by 1850 and Cuba followed suit in 1867, while a protracted and bloody civil war put an end to the 'peculiar institution' of slavery in the United States. America had contributed its own 'Africa Squadron' to the fight against the trade, but it had enjoyed far less success than its British counterpart, and the potential benefit of cooperation with British ships was never exploited.

Despite the success of the West Africa Squadron and the glamorisation of its activities in the papers, it remained one of the least popular postings in the Royal Navy. The mortality rate was 55 out of every 1,000 men – more than five times the rate of a crew serving in healthier climates closer to home.

Britain's commitment had proved remarkable – and costly. From its control of



*Freetown is the capital of Sierra Leone and was an important naval base for the West Africa Squadron*



*HMS Pluto, the first paddle steamer to join the West Africa Squadron, captures a much larger slave transport*

55 per cent of the global sugar market prior to the ban, Britain's share had dropped to just 15 per cent by 1850. Around 5,000 British sailors and soldiers died attempting to enforce the ban, with casualties mostly attributable to the unhealthy conditions in the areas patrolled. Land-based garrisons at locations such as Sierra Leone suffered most in this regard.

Around 1.8 per cent of British national income was lost every year for 60 years, and the ban antagonised many of the world's other powers, sometimes almost leading to hostilities. War had briefly flared up between Britain and Brazil in 1850, and tensions with France had reached a critical level over the right of Royal Navy ships to search French vessels. Despite the cost to the anti-slavery effort, the right was suspended in 1845 to avert war.

The West Africa Squadron had played its part as well as it could, capturing around 1,600 ships and making the trans-Atlantic routes a more perilous crossing for slavers. However, Britain's commitment was not yet over. Even after the slave trade had been crippled on Africa's west coast, it continued on the east. A separate effort would be mounted there, with many of the men who had cut their teeth in the West Africa Squadron leading the way.

Images: Alamy, Getty



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*Vengeance came swiftly for the Razakars, who collaborated with Pakistan. Guerrilla fighters and angry mobs dealt them a harsh punishment*





# BRUTAL BIRTH

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# BANGLADESH

PART THREE

Pakistan spent almost a year trying to wipe out the Bengali resistance. They didn't expect to be crushed by India and suffer their worst military defeat in their history

**I**n December 1971 the nation that used to be East Pakistan was attacked from three sides by the Indian military. The air force cleared the skies of hostile aircraft in just two days, while the navy successfully imposed a tight blockade over the Bay of Bengal.

Just ten days after commencing hostilities, Indian commanders completed their encirclement of East Pakistan's capital, Dhaka. By 13 December the air force's jets were busy making sport of the Pakistanis still holed up in the city. The few token anti-aircraft guns on the ground hardly bothered the MiGs and Sukhois dancing in the sky.

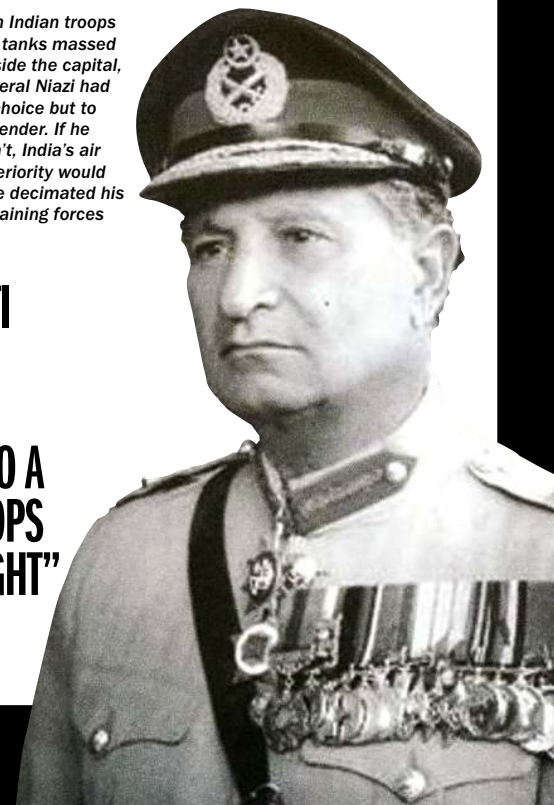
At the head of the Indian army in Bangladesh was the Sikh commander Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora. He was a decorated veteran with a soldiering career that stretched back to the days of the British Empire, which wasn't uncommon among the top brass of both India and Pakistan at the time. They had all been comrades in arms once but had become rivals after the partition of their respective countries in 1947.

Pakistan's garrison in Bangladesh was under the command of Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi, who was appointed the martial law administrator and East Pakistan's highest ranking soldier. While defeating the local Mukti Bahini guerrillas was well within the Pakistani military's competence, Niazi's adherence to a 'fortress strategy' left his troops ill-prepared for India's onslaught. The Pakistanis could only offer token resistance in a few towns they controlled, and these were already besieged by Bangladeshi guerrillas.

With surprising speed, three Indian corps struck from the east and west on 4 December, while paratroopers were dropped into the town of Tangail just northwest of Dhaka on

*With Indian troops and tanks massed outside the capital, General Niazi had no choice but to surrender. If he didn't, India's air superiority would have decimated his remaining forces*

**"WHILE DEFEATING THE LOCAL MUKTI BAHINI GUERRILLAS WAS WELL WITHIN THE PAKISTANI MILITARY'S COMPETENCE, NIAZI'S ADHERENCE TO A 'FORTRESS STRATEGY' LEFT HIS TROOPS ILL-PREPARED FOR INDIA'S ONSLAUGHT"**





11 December. With help from hundreds of Mukti Bahini, the garrison defending Tangail was overwhelmed and compelled to lay down arms. This final manoeuvre was spun by the Indian army's public relations as a huge airdrop involving thousands, when in reality just 500 elite troops had been sent to Tangail. But newspapers around the world fell for the ruse, and it was enough to sink the morale of the large Pakistani garrison in Dhaka, who still pined for a decisive battle. With Indian paratroops closing in on them, they faced complete destruction.

## Desperate measures

There had been an attempt to stave off the inevitable, however. In the first week of the war West Pakistan opened a second front in the deserts of Rajasthan. The goal was to cut deep inside India's arid frontier and perhaps seize a city or two. But this offensive got bogged down by the ambiguity of its goals.

The decisive battle of the second front was almost farcical. A Pakistani tank brigade was tasked with capturing Longewala, a remote town that military intelligence believed offered little resistance, as a springboard for seizing the more vital Jaisalmer. But once the Pakistanis' Chinese-made Type 59 tanks

**Right: Pakistani officers were ordered to lay down their arms - standard issue revolvers and Chinese AK-47s**

reached Longewala's outskirts they were fired upon.

As it turned out, an unknown Indian force was dug in, waiting for the Pakistanis to come within range. The Pakistanis spent the night trying to manoeuvre around the objective, which they believed was surrounded by a minefield, and crush the determined opposition. The effort proved futile and a dozen abandoned Type 59s littered the dusty terrain surrounding Longewala by daybreak.

Indian reinforcements finally arrived at noon. Two Hunter jets armed with rockets set upon the Pakistani tanks like buzzards. The lead Hunter pilot, Wing Commander K.S. Suresh, later described the engagement: "It was an awesome sight in Longewala," he recalled. "With several tanks on fire and some still burning... tanks were going round and round in crazy circles, kicking up dust to hide themselves to the extent possible."

Later in the day Hunter jets escorted a Canberra reconnaissance plane over Longewala,



**"WEST PAKISTAN OPENED A SECOND FRONT IN THE DESERTS OF RAJASTHAN. THE GOAL WAS TO CUT DEEP INSIDE INDIA'S ARID FRONTIER"**

*The Instrument of Surrender signed on 16 December was the Pakistani military's lowest ebb. It meant 93,000 of its soldiers had to disarm and march into captivity*





*Pakistan's soldiers were armed with British, Chinese and German rifles. These were collected by Indian troops in the days after the surrender at Dhaka*





where it captured an image of an empty desert criss-crossed by frenzied tank tracks. The timely arrival of air support decided the battle and relieved Longewala's defenders – a single company of the 23 Punjab Regiment armed with machine guns and recoilless rifles. Not surprisingly, the details of the battle made perfect fodder for Indian newspapers, who extolled the courage of the nation's hardy and selfless 'jawans'.

**Jacob's gamble**

So disappointing were the engagements in the second front that peace was soon restored along the closely guarded border separating West Pakistan and India. Broadening the war to save East Pakistan had proved a costly miscalculation. There was no use trying to save Dhaka, which by that point was like an island cut off from the rest of liberated Bangladesh.

Unwilling to jeopardise their main objective, which still had a 26,000-strong garrison of Pakistani soldiers, Indian army HQ decided on a compromise. The task was delegated not to Lieutenant General Aurora but imposed on the chief of staff and main war planner, Lieutenant General J.F.R. Jacob. Transported by helicopter to Dhaka on 15 December, Jacob was escorted to Niazi's office, where he was received by an assemblage of Pakistani generals.

A 24-hour ceasefire prevailed at 5pm. The following day, Jacob presented the surrender terms to Niazi, who rebutted his guest. "You have only come to discuss a ceasefire and withdrawal as proposed by me!" a furious Niazi exclaimed. Unmoved, Jacob reminded Niazi that if he didn't comply with the terms then the safety of his men and their families would be imperilled.

Jacob, anxious over this outcome, left a document he wanted to be acknowledged on Niazi's desk and excused himself.

**"THE STREETS OF DHAKA ECHOED WITH CELEBRATORY CRIES OF JOI BANGLA! AND GUNFIRE FOR DAYS AS GUERRILLAS, MOSTLY TEENAGE BOYS EMACIATED FROM THEIR MONTHS IN THE WILDERNESS, REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES"**

The document was the Instrument of Surrender. Just three paragraphs long, it guaranteed that all West Pakistani forces would be protected according to the Geneva Conventions. Returning to Niazi's office after half an hour, Jacob asked whether the surrender terms were accepted, eliciting no response from his counterpart. He asked again and again. Seizing the initiative, Jacob retrieved the document he had given Niazi and declared, "I take it as accepted."

On 16 December Niazi reluctantly met Aurora in the Dhaka racecourse and signed the surrender surrounded by the press and a crowd of Indian officers at 4.55pm, just minutes away from the ceasefire's expiration. Lieutenant General Jacob even managed to sneak in Aurora's wife to witness the proceedings. The photograph of Niazi and Aurora hunched over the surrender papers has since become the Bangladesh war's defining moment.

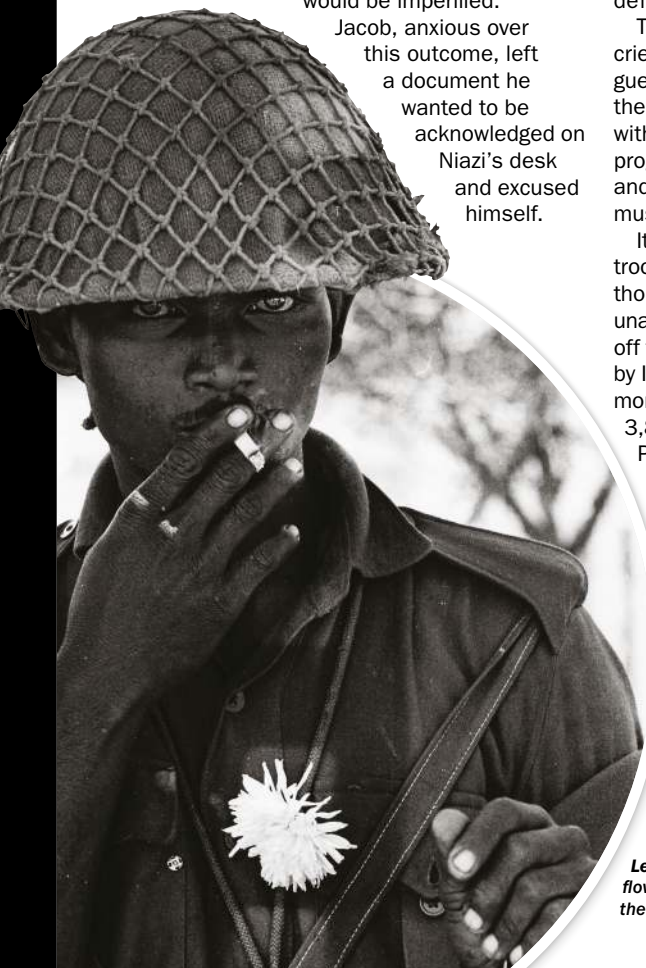
The streets of Dhaka echoed with celebratory cries of "Joy Bangla!" and gunfire for days as guerrillas, mostly teenage boys emaciated from their months in the wilderness, were reunited with their families. A huge disarmament program was soon underway, and in towns and villages across Bangladesh the guerrillas mustered and separated from their weapons.

It took a full week before all of the Pakistani troops in Bangladesh surrendered. Tens of thousands were dispersed in the countryside, unaware of the surrender in Dhaka – either cut off from the chain of command or encircled by Indian forces and Mukti Bahini. The rapid momentum of the war meant India only lost 3,800 men, with twice as many wounded.

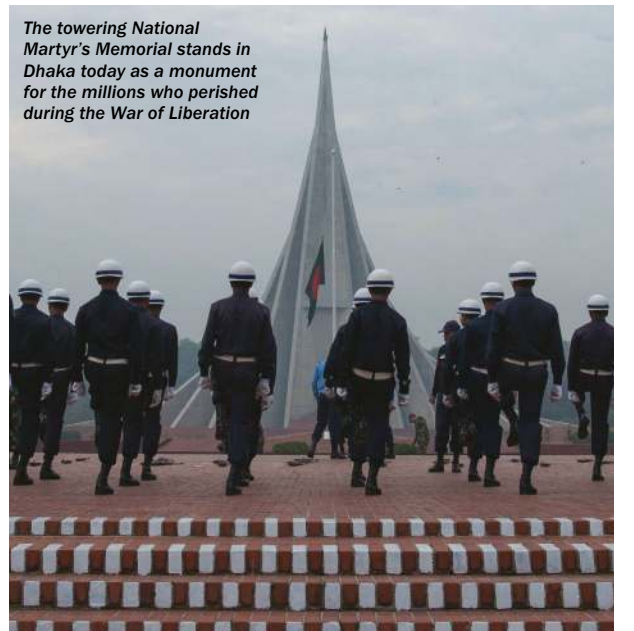
Pakistan, on the other hand, suffered 9,000 killed. But by the year's end 93,000 of its soldiers had to be marched into camps.

A remarkable aspect of this bondage, in shocking contrast to the miseries inflicted by West Pakistan on the Bengalis, was the fair treatment accorded so many POWs. Housed in large compounds ringed by barbed wire, Pakistan's imprisoned soldiers were fed and quartered for almost two years, their families often kept in separate camps. Harsh punishments were only justified for infractions and the occasional escape attempts. It wasn't until the Simla

*Left: A soldier enjoys a relaxing cigarette and wears a flower to celebrate victory and peace at the conclusion of the war in Bangladesh*



*As impeccable as they appeared, the fact remained that Pakistani officers ordered their troops to commit atrocities against the local population for months*



*The towering National Martyr's Memorial stands in Dhaka today as a monument for the millions who perished during the War of Liberation*





*Evidence of Pakistan's atrocities weren't difficult to find. Uncovered mass graves in Dhaka served as gruesome mementos of the war. Many former Mukti Bahini fighters returned home to claim the remains of their families and loved ones*



**“THE NINE MILLION REFUGEES WHO FLED TO INDIA, HAVING LOST THEIR HOMES AND POSSESSIONS, WERE CONDEMNED TO DIRE POVERTY”**



Agreement in 1972 that plans for repatriation began, a process that ended in 1974 when the POWs were sent home.

### **A bitter legacy**

Yet there truly wasn't much to celebrate aside from the war's end. The nine million refugees who fled to India, having lost their homes and possessions, were condemned to dire poverty. There was no accurate measurement for the suffering visited on the Bangladeshis since the beginning of Operation Searchlight in late March. Did the Pakistanis and their Razakar proxies slaughter a million? Two million?

It was only months after the war when a proper figure – a monstrous three million deaths – became the accepted body count. These weren't the people felled in combat. The Mukti Bahini's casualties were higher than the conventional forces in the war, but it paled in comparison to civilian deaths. In the space of ten months Pakistani soldiers butchered 3 million people and raped anywhere between 200,000 and 400,000 women.

The liberation of Bangladesh left South Asia more divided than ever. The Awami League's champion, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was hailed a national hero and enjoyed a popular mandate upon assuming power in 1972. But he had gained a country without a functioning government and political divisions soon emerged. On 15 August 1975 Bangladesh's celebrated founding father, its Bangabandhu, was assassinated during a coup d'etat by disgruntled army officers. Rahman was repeatedly warned of plots against him for months by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her intelligence chief, but he dismissed these with surprising faith: "These are my own children and they will not harm me," he reportedly told a visiting agent from India's secretive Research and Analysis Wing, or RAW.

Bangladesh would be swept by 22 coups and attempted coups in the next quarter-century. Meanwhile West Pakistan simply became Pakistan, with its own flawed governance model and persistent domestic unrest. The only lesson from the stinging defeat in 1971 was the futility of war with India.

This set the stage for the world's least known nuclear arms race. India first tested an atom bomb in 1974, while Pakistan clandestinely set about researching the methods to achieve the same for the next 20 years. It wasn't until 1998 that both countries had their arsenals of mass destruction.

Another unintended consequence of the Bangladesh war was the rise of Pakistan's notorious spy agency the Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, and its cultivation of terrorists groups in Kashmir. If India couldn't be fought one way, the strategic logic went, then it was best to fight it with subterfuge. This had dire consequences for the region since Pakistan stirred up radical Islamic terrorism within its own borders and later in Afghanistan and Kashmir, to achieve a vague sense of 'strategic depth'.

The unprecedented success of the 1971 war is an Indian fetish. But the awful truth of Bangladesh's liberation is the steep human cost it imposed on its civilian victims.

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*Monuments large and small are found throughout Bangladesh depicting the heroism of the Mukti Bahini, though most local historians do acknowledge India's critical role in winning the war*



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## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# EDWARD 'TED' KENNA

In full view of an enemy gun emplacement, Private Kenna fired his Bren gun amid a hail of Japanese machine gun fire, calmly taking out enemy gunners one by one and saving his comrades

WORDS MURRAY DAHM

**E**dward 'Ted' Kenna learned to shoot by hunting rabbits in Hamilton in rural Victoria, Australia, during the Great Depression. His father had worked on the railways and as Kenna later recalled, "their wages wasn't so hot", and so anything extra (both in terms of pelts and meat on the table for the family of nine) helped. His skills would stand him in great stead when it came to his experiences in World War II. 15 May 1945 saw him advancing on the northwestern slopes of the Wirui Mission Station overlooking the Wewak airstrip in northern New Guinea.

Kenna's division was involved in the Aitape-Wewak campaign, one of the final operations of the Pacific theatre, fought from November 1944 until the end of the war. Indeed, it was on the Wewak airstrip that the Japanese General Hatazo Adachi surrendered to Australian forces on 13 September 1945.

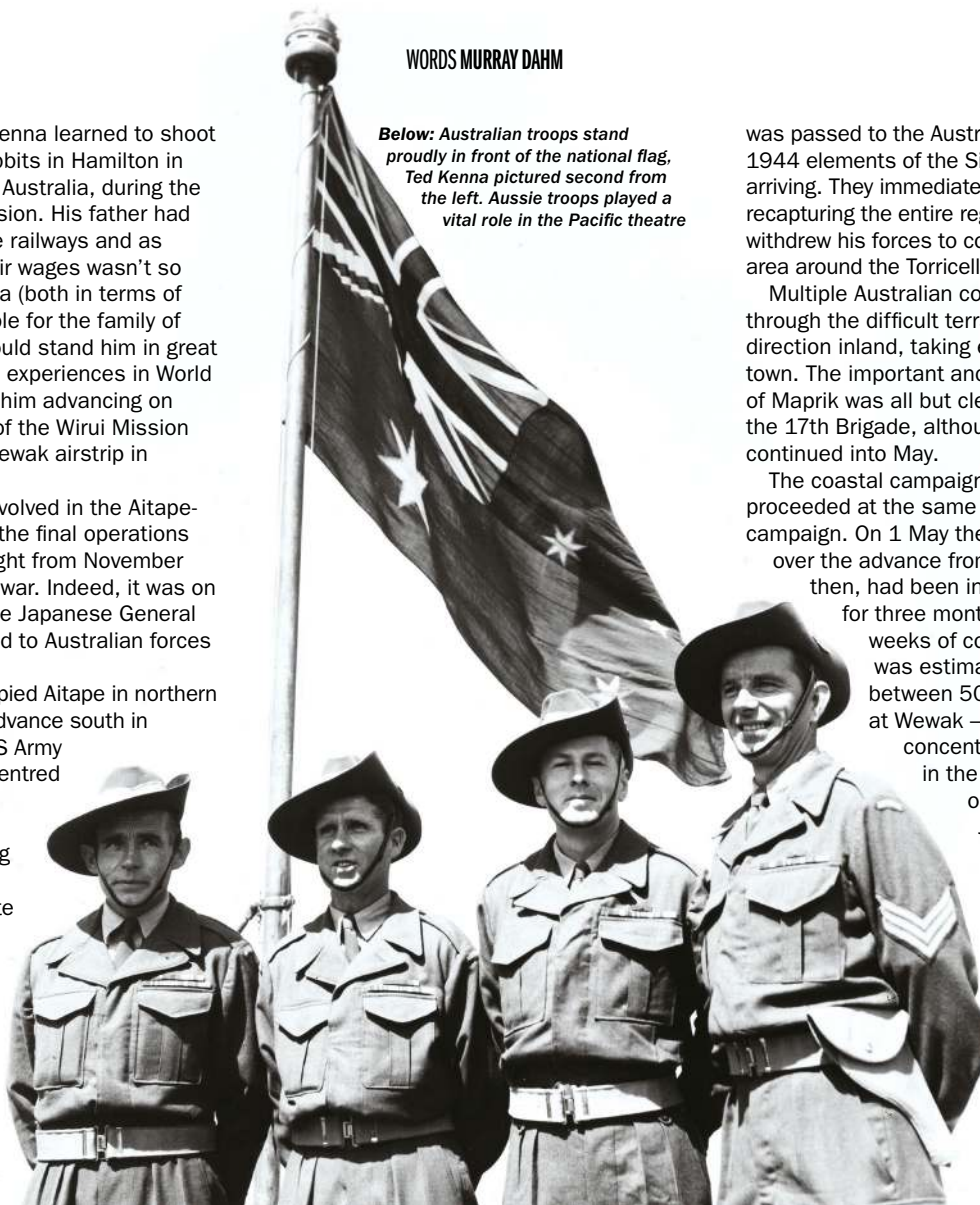
The Japanese had occupied Aitape in northern New Guinea during their advance south in 1942. In April 1944 the US Army retook parts of the area (centred on the Wewak airstrip) to secure their flank and act as a base for the upcoming Philippines campaign. Fighting was limited despite there being 30-35,000 Japanese troops from the 18th Army in the area. Responsibility for the defence of the region

*Below: Australian troops stand proudly in front of the national flag. Ted Kenna pictured second from the left. Aussie troops played a vital role in the Pacific theatre*

was passed to the Australians and from October 1944 elements of the Sixth Battalion began arriving. They immediately took on the task of recapturing the entire region. General Adachi withdrew his forces to concentrate them in the area around the Torricelli Mountains and Wewak.

Multiple Australian columns made their way through the difficult terrain in a southeasterly direction inland, taking each village and town. The important and well-defended area of Maprik was all but cleared by 22 April by the 17th Brigade, although sporadic fighting continued into May.

The coastal campaign against Wewak proceeded at the same time as the Maprik campaign. On 1 May the 19th Brigade took over the advance from the 16th that, by then, had been in a forward position for three months and had seen 15 weeks of continuous action. It was estimated that there were between 500 and 1,000 Japanese at Wewak – by far the greatest concentration of enemy forces in the area. The town fell on 11 May and the Japanese withdrew southwards over the Prince Alexander Mountains, leaving strong defensive positions behind them on each successive knoll and ridge. Each





*Edward Kenna was known as both 'Ted', and 'Ned' to his mates. Hunting rabbits during the Great Depression made him a crack shot, a skill that would come to the fore on 15 May 1945*

..... ● .....

**“WE DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT BUNKER AT ALL UNTIL IT OPENED UP AND THEN THAT'S WHEN I GOT ME GOOD SHIRT RUINED I MIGHT ADD”**

..... ● .....





position could fire on the previous position and needed to be taken out individually.

Soon the only area not secured by the Australians was the rugged terrain to the south overlooking the Wewak airstrip, and it was against those positions that Eighth Platoon, A Company 2/4th Infantry Battalion, 19th Infantry Brigade advanced. Heavy machine gun positions and artillery could fire down on to the airfield and surrounding area and needed to be taken out. The most dominant of these positions was the 90-metre-high (300-foot) kunai grass-covered hill of Wirui Mission Station, known as Mission Hill. To begin with, A Company had the assistance of a tank from C Squadron of the 2/4th Armoured Regiment but, as Kenna later recalled, "It cut out more or less... stranded up on the hill there, and we had to go forward on our own."

The men had to proceed on foot through the tall kunai grass. The terrain was rugged and there was no artillery or mortar support for the infantry assault. The actions of that day saw some of the fiercest fighting in New Guinea during the war.

The eastern slopes and the top of the hill were taken by nightfall on 14 May, but the Japanese fought back from bunkers on the northwestern slopes. Kenna's platoon was ordered forward to deal with a machine gun post so that the company could continue.

Kenna's support section and one other section were to pin down the enemy position while the remainder of the platoon outflanked it. Kenna's citation stated, "When the attacking sections came into view of the enemy they

were immediately engaged at very close range by heavy automatic fire from a position not previously disclosed." Both sections started taking casualties. The citation continued, "Private Kenna endeavoured to put his Bren gun into a position where he could engage the bunker but was unable to do so because of the nature of the ground. On his own initiative and without orders, Private Kenna immediately stood up and in full view of the enemy less than 50 yards [46 metres] away and engaged the bunker, firing his Bren gun from the hip."

Kenna's version (related in 2000, aged 80) reads slightly differently, although it does give a sense of his no-nonsense approach to combat: "Anyhow this machine gun opened up... and that's when I got up. I couldn't see down below, I got up and opened fire, three shots and was a bit lucky there and a couple got in the road of a couple of bullets. But then... when I was doing that, the second bunker opened up on me and that's when I put that out of action too, with a bit of luck ... I couldn't get at it properly with the Bren so I called for a rifle, which one of the boys [Private Rau]



*Inset, right: The landing of Farida Force at Dove Bay on 11 May 1945. This ad hoc unit of 623 men, mainly commandos, would cut the Wewak road and prevent Japanese forces from escaping southeast. These actions took place at the same time as Kenna's at Wirui Mission Station. Farida Force was then placed under the command of the 19th Infantry Brigade (which included Kenna's unit)*

*In 1944 this US attack focused on the air strip in Wewak as part of an effort to destroy the Japanese air power in the region*



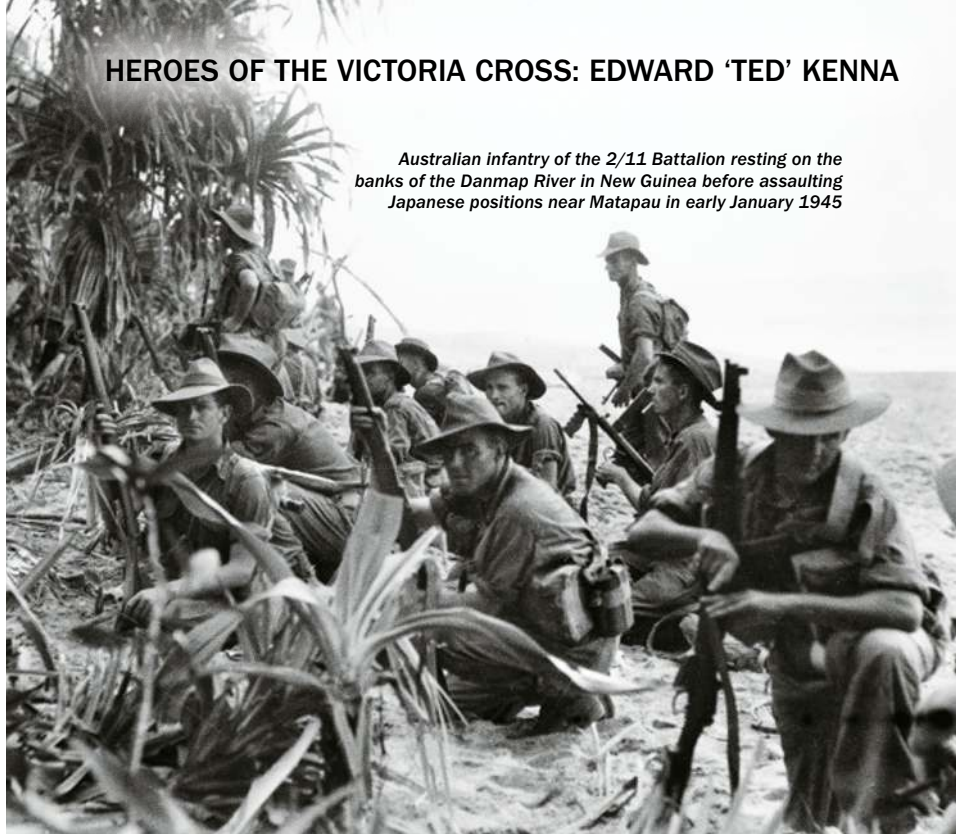




An Australian light machine gun team in action near Wewak in June 1945, just weeks after Kenna's action. Like the soldier pictured here, Kenna was also armed with the Bren light machine gun

## HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS: EDWARD 'TED' KENNA

Australian infantry of the 2/11 Battalion resting on the banks of the Danmap River in New Guinea before assaulting Japanese positions near Matapau in early January 1945



**“THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE COMPANY ATTACK WOULD HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY ENDANGERED AND MANY CASUALTIES SUSTAINED BUT FOR PRIVATE KENNA’S MAGNIFICENT COURAGE AND COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR HIS OWN SAFETY”**

threw up to me from the grass, and I happened to get a hit there so I was all right.”

In a later television interview, Kenna said he couldn't explain why he had done what he did. "The opportunity came to shoot and I shot, that's all." When pressed as to why he did it, he replied, "I couldn't answer that and I never tell a lie." He called himself a 'sticky-beak' – always wanting to know what was going on – and he couldn't see what was going on lying down, so he stood up to take a look. He also said, "It's just one of those things that you do, I suppose. It's hard to say. I think anyone would have done the same thing in the same position because, well it's no good laying down there and doing nothing. You had to do something, and I don't think the Nips [Japanese] would have brought tea or dinner for me."

The Victoria Cross citation goes on to speak of Kenna's "magnificent bravery in the face of concentrated fire", that the bunker was captured without further loss and the company action was successfully concluded. Large amounts of munitions and equipment were captured and the successful taking of Wirui Mission gave the Australians complete control of the Wewak coastal plain.

Kenna's modesty and no-nonsense approach can be seen in his words. He had enrolled in the Citizen Military Force in the 1930s and then the Australian army in 1940. He said that he wasn't one of the brave ones who rushed off to war and only wanted to go and fight when he actually had to. He thought that the greatest battle a soldier had to perform was actually

waiting to go to war. Kenna was assigned to the 23/31st Battalion and served in Victoria and Darwin, Australia.

In June 1943 he was sent to Queensland, training at the Jungle Warfare School in Canungara. Kenna recalled, "We learnt the way to treat a jungle and the way the jungle treats those that is kind to them somehow. It might only be walking from here to there, but you've got to move with certain care or certain respect, I'll put it that way, and that's how it is." Kenna's battalion was then disbanded and its men sent to other units. Kenna was allocated to the 2/4 Battalion, Second AIF, and in October 1944 he sailed for New Guinea.

It is odd that a crack shot with a rifle was given charge of his support section's Bren gun – he felled successive enemies with a single shot at Wirui Station. But Kenna appreciated his Bren, even if he saw its limitations: "The Bren is more of a gun that you put on automatic and give them hell like that... the perfect shot, with a Bren, you couldn't do it."

Kenna's interviews make it clear that he was a character (what the Australians would call a Larrikin: a mischievous person, uncultivated and rowdy but good hearted) who often spoke out of turn to his superiors. "A lot of times that I've spoken to a higher up, like say a captain or lieutenant [lieutenant] or something like that and told him in certain terms that what he was doing wouldn't win the war at all, but when I look back at it now, everything I done and everything I was going to do and failed like they told me, and I went against it to my own stupid mind."





Australian artillery engages the enemy in Wewak in 1945



*Inset, left: A Matilda tank supporting Australian infantry on the coast at Wewak*



On at least one occasion he was deprived of a promotion to lance corporal, which was probably given to him after his action at Wirui Station, but he lost it less than three weeks later.

Kenna makes some interesting observations regarding not being in the 'big' war or the major campaigns that usually fill history books. The campaigns around Wewak were characterised as 'small-scale patrolling with small-scale company attacks'. The forces against which the Australians advanced were seldom more than a few hundred and in some actions only a handful. Kenna, however, maintained that "war could be a little patrol. One men, two men, three men on patrol and you get shot, well that war is the biggest war he's ever been in – only a handful of men... and if you call them big, in my book the small little patrol could be the biggest war of the lot... It's one life as far as they're concerned and that's the big war. That's my idea of war... There's no such thing as big war. It's a one-man job and that's it."

For all that the Aitape-Wewak campaign may seem like a minor one today, two Victoria Crosses were earned by members of the Australian forces during the fighting there, which puts the heroics they performed into perspective. Lieutenant Albert Chowne was

awarded a posthumous VC on 25 March at Dagua during the advance on Wewak. Australians were awarded 20 Victoria Crosses during World War II, two coming in the Wewak campaign and two others (Reg Rattey and Frank Partridge) during the 1945 Bougainville campaign, also in New Guinea. The apparently disproportionate number of awards for these minor late war campaigns reveals, as Kenna contended, that war was a one-man job and that the Australians who fought in those campaigns did so as heroically as any other serviceman. Some three weeks after his actions at Wirui Station, Kenna was wounded in the mouth and evacuated to a military hospital in Australia. It was there that he met his future wife, Marjorie, who nursed him. But he also overheard the doctors talking about his serious wounds and giving him only a 40 per cent chance of survival. Kenna's response was typical: "Pigs. I'm the other way, don't you worry."

After spending more than a year in hospital, he eventually pulled through and began the road to recovery. Bizarrely, he almost missed the phone call to advise him of his Victoria Cross, because he was in the shower. His immediate reply on being told he was to receive the honour was, "Oh that's a strange thing, you know, at this time of day."

**"DESPISE THE INTENSE MACHINE GUN FIRE, HE SEIZED THE RIFLE AND, WITH AMAZING COOLNESS, KILLED THE GUNNER WITH HIS FIRST ROUND"**



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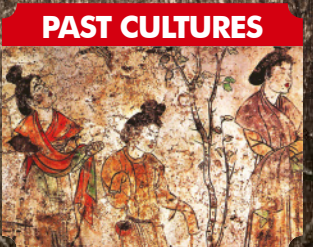


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# VICTORIA'S HAMMER

GARNET WOLSELEY

This general was the brains behind a handful of unconventional campaigns during Queen Victoria's reign

WORDS FRANK JASTRZEMBSKI

A bearded sergeant lugged Captain Garnet Wolseley back from the front line to the surgeon's tent. The 21-year-old captain looked more dead than alive, having been severely wounded when a Russian shell exploded in the British trenches at Sevastopol. Wolseley looked hideous: the skin on his left cheek hung down to his neck, his right eye bulged from its socket, and his face and legs had gashes and cuts from rock fragments that had struck him like projectiles. The surgeon managed to patch the officer up and sewed his left cheek back into place.

When he heard the news that the final British assault would be launched on Sevastopol, Wolseley hobbled out from his hospital bed to a horse. He hoped to ride to the front line and share in the glory. Partially blind and crippled, the young captain burst into tears in frustration when he couldn't mount the beast due to his ailments. But the young army officer would have future opportunities to distinguish himself in the queen's service.

Dr Joseph H. Lehmann, in his superb biography on Wolseley, labelled the general as the "supreme master of irregular warfare". His campaigns against the Métis in Canada, the

Ashanti in West Africa, Colonel 'Urabi's rebels in Egypt and the Mahdi's Ansar in Sudan were models for how to conduct a military campaign far from a base of operations and overcome logistical hindrances. His campaigns were conducted with speed, efficiency and a clearly defined objective. Those around him coined the phrase 'Everything's all Sir Garnet' to signify that everything was accounted for with great care and thoroughness during a Wolseley campaign. Apart from his final effort, all his missions ended with success.

Garnet Joseph Wolseley was born on 4 June 1833 in Dublin, Ireland, the son of an army major. His father died at an early age, leaving his mother with seven children and a meagre army pension. Wolseley wanted to enter the army like his father, but did not have the money to purchase an officer's commission. He wrote two letters to the Duke of Wellington asking the hero of Waterloo to grant him a commission based on his father's service record, but nothing came of it. His mother came to the rescue and pleaded in a letter to Wellington to grant him a commission. In 1852 Wolseley received an appointment as an ensign in the 12th (East Suffolk) Regiment of Foot at the age of 18.

For Wolseley, promotion would have to be earned. The best way to achieve this would be to get noticed through reckless deeds on the battlefield. He was obsessed with being part of every campaign and volunteered for the most dangerous assignments. But Wolseley was no fool. One officer later noted, "He was possessed of a courage equal to his brain power." He transferred to the 80th (Staffordshire Volunteers) Regiment of Foot for a chance to see action during the Second Anglo-Burmese War.

The war ended before he arrived, but he took part in General Sir John Cheape's storming of the bandit chief Nya-Myat-Toon's fortified stockade at Kyoukazeen in 1853. Cheape's first attack failed. When volunteers were called to conduct a suicidal frontal assault and secure a foothold, Wolseley stepped forward. This was his chance. He yelled "Come on! Come on!" to his men as he rushed head-on at the enemy's defences. He tripped into a Burmese mantrap and was nearly impaled. Ashamed, he climbed out of the hole and rushed back to the British line while under fire, dreading that he would be shot in the back like a coward.

General Cheape called for volunteers for a second time after the initial assault failed.



## BRITAIN'S GREAT 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SOLDIER

Sir Garnet Wolseley has largely been forgotten, but during a career spanning nearly 50 years, he became one of the most celebrated British generals of the Victorian period. His victories contributed to maintaining Britain's rule in North America, Africa and Egypt. When he died in 1913 he was laid to rest in St. Paul's Cathedral with two of his country's greatest war heroes, the Duke of Wellington and Admiral Horatio Nelson.

**“DURING A CAREER  
SPANNING NEARLY 50  
YEARS, HE BECAME ONE  
OF THE MOST CELEBRATED  
BRITISH GENERALS OF  
THE VICTORIAN PERIOD”**







Wolseley's inclusion in this cartoon in 1900 reflects how recognisable a figure he had become during his career



Wolseley stepped forward again, anxious to reclaim his pride. This time the storming party successfully penetrated the stockade, routing the enemy defenders, but not before Wolseley fell wounded. Despite having a piece of metal in his left thigh with blood oozing all over, he experienced "unalloyed joy and elevating satisfaction". He earned promotion to lieutenant, while the other officer who stormed the stockade with Wolseley was killed.

Lieutenant Wolseley transferred regiments for a third time in 1854. This time it was to the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry, destined for service in the Crimea. War had erupted between the Russians and Ottomans, leading to the intervention of the British and French. Wolseley volunteered for service with the Royal Engineers, aware that their assignments in the trenches surrounding the Russian-held Sevastopol were among the most dangerous. He suffered the loss of sight in the same eye as Admiral Nelson when he was severely wounded by a Russian shell. His bravery, energy and resourcefulness gained the notice of his superiors.

After Crimea Wolseley and three companies of his regiment were detained on their way to China when the sepoys mutinied in India in 1857. He joined Sir Colin Campbell's army, taking part in the relief of Lucknow. He made sure he was the first man to reach the besieged Residency. But the ambitious officer gained censure rather than praise from his superior for superseding orders. He finally made it to China in 1860 as a member of Sir James Hope Grant's staff during the Second Opium War,

## “HE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF SIGHT IN THE SAME EYE AS ADMIRAL NELSON WHEN HE WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED BY A RUSSIAN SHELL”

taking part in the assault on the Taku Forts and the obliteration of the Summer Palace. By the age of 25 Wolseley was a major with a collection of medals dangling from his breast.

Wolseley took two months leave in 1862 and travelled to the United States to observe the civil war being fought between the North and South. He tagged along with General Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Wolseley admired General Lee and declared that, "I have met but two men who realise my ideas of what a true hero should be: my friend Charles Gordon was one, General Lee was the other." He criticised the "inefficient manner in which both he [Lee] and his opponents were often served by their subordinate commanders, and how badly the staff and outpost work generally was performed on both sides". Wolseley always prided himself on having an efficient and tight-knit staff, nicknamed the 'Wolseley Gang', though sometimes they could be quarrelsome and over ambitious.

Wolseley conducted his first independent campaign in 1870. A Métis leader named Louis Riel led a revolt and established the Republic of

the Northwest in the Red River Colony when the Hudson's Bay Company turned over the land they were living on to the Canadian government. They refused to become Canadians. Riel's followers captured Fort Garry, a station of the Hudson's Bay Company, and established their new capital. Riel took it a step further when he ordered the execution of a cantankerous surveyor named Thomas Scott.

Wolseley, who was serving in Canada as a quartermaster general, was selected to command the army to be sent into Western Canada to secure British sovereignty. This would be no typical military campaign. He would have to transfer 1,400 Canadian militiamen and British regulars across nearly 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles) of impenetrable wilderness and down swollen rapids and rivers to reach Riel's base at Fort Garry. Half of the journey had to be made through territory few had navigated before. Lieutenant William Butler of the 69th Foot, who joined Wolseley, declared that the expedition would require a combination of brains, skill and muscle. Most thought it would be impossible.

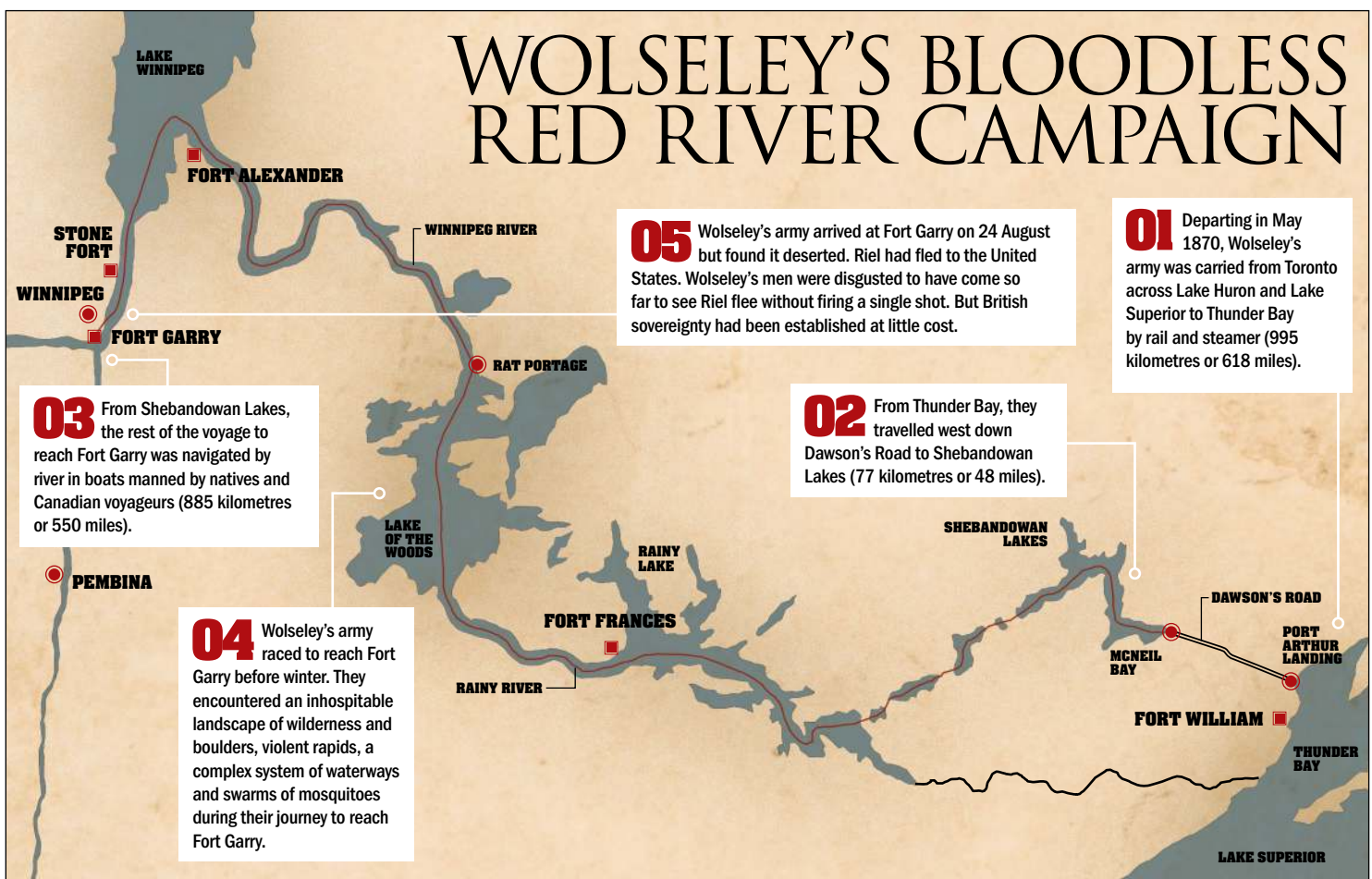
Wolseley got to work organising and methodically planning the expedition – a Wolseley trademark for future campaigns. Those around him were inspired by his energy, confidence and determination. He hired Indians and Canadian voyageurs to man the boats assigned to transport his soldiers. All provisions required had to be calculated before departure and transported with the army. Wolseley inspected all equipment and added items he thought appropriate to make his



British troops landing during Wolseley's Ashanti Campaign



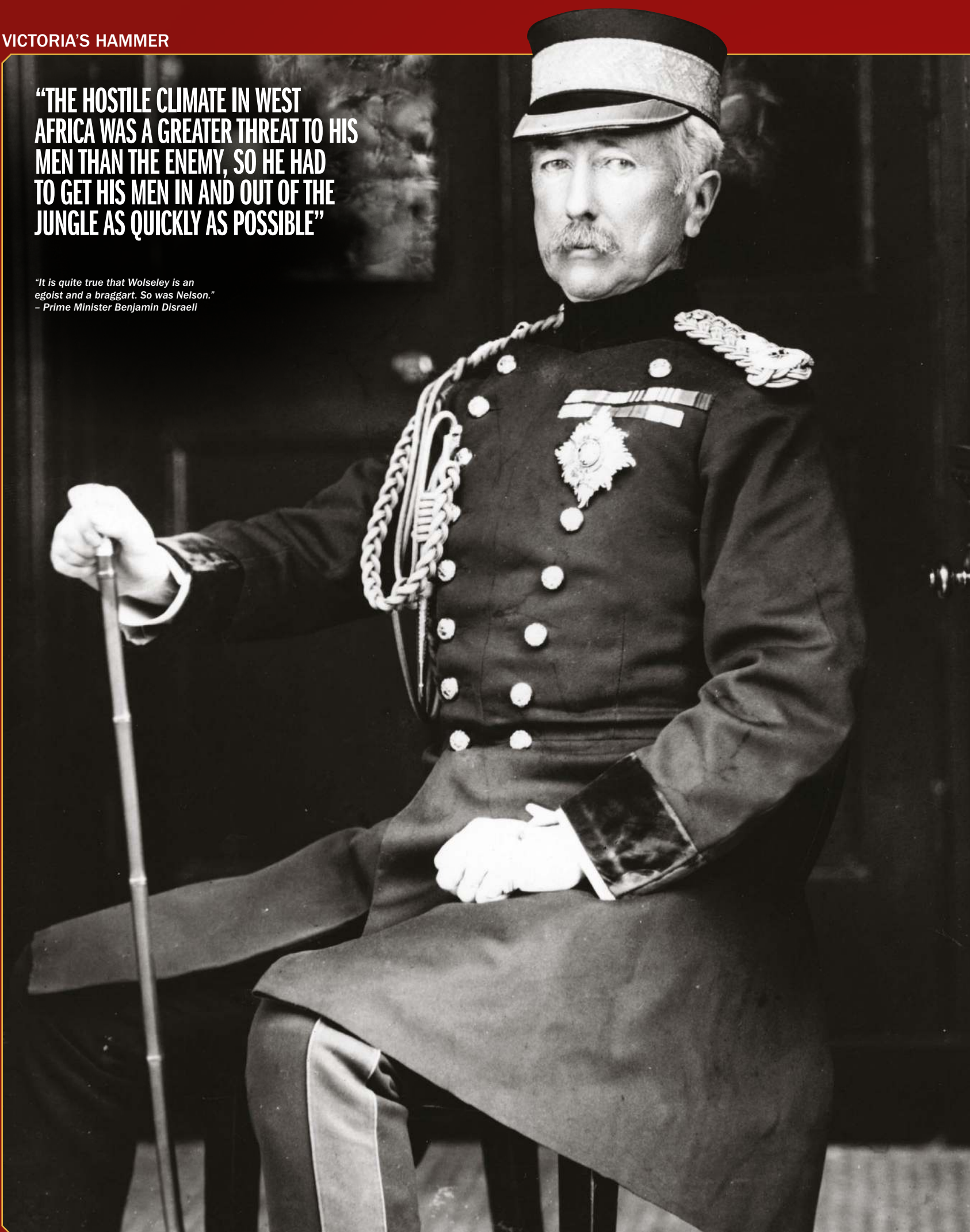
## WOLSELEY'S BLOODLESS RED RIVER CAMPAIGN





**“THE HOSTILE CLIMATE IN WEST AFRICA WAS A GREATER THREAT TO HIS MEN THAN THE ENEMY, SO HE HAD TO GET HIS MEN IN AND OUT OF THE JUNGLE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE”**

*“It is quite true that Wolseley is an egoist and a braggart. So was Nelson.”  
- Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli*





men's job easier and make them more efficient, in one instance replacing the army-issue axe with a more effective American design. Butler, impressed by his meticulous planning, wrote that Wolseley had "the best and most brilliant mind I had ever met in the army".

The campaign was a work of genius. His army successfully travelled by railway, steamer, boat and on foot through the near-impenetrable territory to reach Fort Garry on 24 August after a three-month journey, but Riel had fled to the United States without offering any resistance. Wolseley established British sovereignty without losing a single man or firing a shot, at the cost of a meagre £100,000. The logistical challenges overcome during the expedition proved to be greater obstacles than any opponent Wolseley could have met on the battlefield. He was knighted for his success.

In the aftermath of the Red River expedition, he worked with the Secretary of State for War Edward Cardwell to reform the British Army. He called for reforms such as abolishing purchased commissions, shortening the term of service, improving education and creating the modern army reserve. Wolseley, who had made his way up the army hierarchy without purchasing a commission, understood how this hindered reliable officers from advancing. Like most change, it generated controversy and resistance in the ranks of the army. The Duke of Cambridge, the commander-in-chief of the British Army, criticised Wolseley for being too radical. Wolseley was ahead of his time.

In 1873 Major General Wolseley was dispatched with an expedition to West Africa in response to Ashanti aggression. Under the leadership of King Kofi Karikari, an Ashanti army of 12,000 men defeated local tribes in the British protectorate and marched on the British base at Elmina. A detachment of British soldiers and marines successfully defended the town. Wolseley handpicked 35 officers, the "best and ablest men" he could muster from the empire, to accompany the expedition to punish the Ashanti king.

Wolseley laid out a clear plan and made the necessary arrangements. The hostile climate in West Africa was a greater threat to his men

*Wolseley and his men had to contend with natural obstacles during the Red River expedition*



than the enemy, so he had to get his men in and out of the jungle as quickly as possible. Struck down by fever, he nevertheless led an army of 4,000 composed of locally raised levy troops, British regulars, marines and West Indies troops over 160 kilometres (100 miles) towards the Ashanti capital of Kumasi in January 1874 – the least hazardous time of year for his men. He won a decisive victory at the village of Amoafu on 31 January. He reached Kumasi by 4 February and proceeded to burn the capital and demolish the king's

palace. His quick success caused King Kofi Karikari to agree to pay the British 50,000 ounces of gold and to consent to other humiliating demands. Wolseley was invested with the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George and was made a knight commander of the Order of the Bath.

Wolseley bounced between administrative posts following the Ashanti campaign. He served as the chief administrator of Natal and commissioner and commander-in-chief of soldiers in Cyprus. He was sent to take



*Wolseley's march on the Ashanti capital of Kumasi*



A depiction of the  
Battle of Tell-el-Kebir  
in 1882



command of the forces in South Africa to relieve Lord Chelmsford following the disaster at Isandlwana, but he arrived around the time the ousted general won a decisive victory at Ulundi. Wolseley afterwards fought a campaign against the Bapedi under the leadership of Chief Sekukuni, bombarding him into submission at his mountain fortress. For this, he received the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath.

He spent a brief time serving as adjutant general before being dispatched to Egypt to crush Colonel Ahmed 'Urabi's nationalist revolt in 1882. The British backed the ineffective Khedive Tewfik in order to protect their financial interests in the country. Wolseley, who was by now a national hero, was chosen for the task. He arranged for 40,000 soldiers and 41,000 tons of supplies to be shipped to Egypt. He deceived 'Urabi on where he would conduct his landing by feeding false information to the British newspapers.

He landed his army at Port Said and moved inland towards the entrenched Egyptian position at Tell-el-Kebir. Wolseley planned to march 13,000 men to the outskirts of 'Urabi's entrenchments during the night and strike his position at daybreak, hoping to catch the 26,000 Egyptians unprepared. Timing and the element of surprise were crucial. Few thought this bold manoeuvre could succeed. On 13 September 1882 Wolseley's column struck and routed 'Urabi's army after a fierce struggle.

Wolseley once again was the hero of the hour. But his next campaign, in the Sudan, would be his last. On 4 August 1885 Parliament voted to send an expedition to rescue General Charles George 'Chinese' Gordon, who was

## **“GORDON'S DEATH WAS A NATIONAL CALAMITY, AND WOLSELEY BECAME A SCAPEGOAT. HE NEVER AGAIN HELD A FIELD COMMAND”**

besieged in Khartoum by the Mahdi's army. It was a race against time to reach Khartoum, over 2,200 kilometres (1,400 miles) from Cairo. The expert at directing this kind of operation was called on again to rescue Gordon.

Everything was meticulously planned for and prepared by Wolseley. He intended to take his army up the Nile by boat to Khartoum, similar to his Red River expedition. Wolseley had nine-metre (30-foot) boats built to navigate the Nile's cataracts. He even recruited crewmen from Canada and Africa to man them. Thousands of men and their supplies were then transported up the Nile towards their destination in Sudan.

But Wolseley's column moved too slowly. It seemed as if everything that could go wrong did. He sent a desert column to reach Gordon before it was too late, but its commander, Major General Sir Herbert Stewart, was mortally wounded at the Battle of Abu Klea. "The sun of my luck set when Stewart was wounded," Wolseley later wrote. A less aggressive officer, Sir Charles William Wilson, assumed command of the relief column. Wilson reached Khartoum less than 48 hours after it was stormed and Gordon killed. Gordon's death was a national

calamity, and Wolseley became a scapegoat. He never again held a field command.

When the Duke of Cambridge stepped down in 1895 Wolseley assumed the role of commander-in-chief of the British Army. But the position had been stripped of its authority, to the disgust of Wolseley. He finally retired in 1901 as his brilliant mind was slowly being destroyed by Alzheimer's disease.

The master of Queen Victoria's wars drifted into ignominy even before his death. The outbreak of World War I would wipe out his memory altogether, replacing him with new heroes like Kitchener, Haig and Churchill. He complained before his death that he wished to die like Nelson in the heat of battle, not in a bed "like an old woman".

He most likely would have been recognised today as Britain's greatest soldier of the 19th century had he died like Nelson, at the apex of his career.

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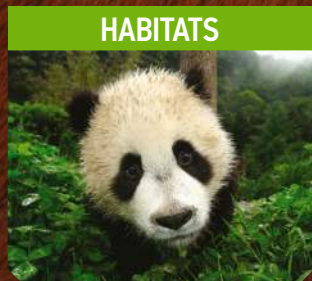


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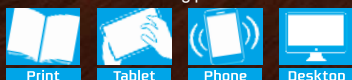


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Norwegian SAR AW101 612 on a pre delivery test flight at the Yeovil Westland facility on the 10 May 2017

**“THE AW101 HAS  
BECOME THE MOST MODERN  
AND ADVANCED MEDIUM-LIFT  
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Operator's Handbook

# AW101 MERLIN



WORDS &amp; IMAGES RICH PITTMAN

This modern, multi-role helicopter offers an advanced solution for military, search and rescue, government and heads of state (VVIP) transportation

**T**he AgustaWestland AW101 was initially designated as the European Helicopter Industries (EHI) EH101 in the 1980s, following its early concept as a replacement naval anti-submarine warfare aircraft.

An international marketing study highlighted a requirement for a 30-seat helicopter, so European Helicopter Industries decided to redevelop the EH-101 into a multi-role aircraft. As a medium-lift helicopter, the aircraft

would be able to meet the demands of utility, government and civilian corporations in the 1990s. An initial nine pre-production models were produced to demonstrate these potential configurations to the worldwide market.

With significant mid-life updates, the AW101 has become the most modern and advanced medium-lift helicopter available today. It is in service, production and in high demand for its proven performance, demonstrated in operational environments from the Arctic to the

Antarctic. Depending on configuration, up to 30 troop seats or 12 stretchers can be hosted on board. Over 220 AW101 helicopters have been ordered so far worldwide to perform a large number of roles, including personnel recovery, special forces operations, SAR, combat SAR, utility, troop transport, anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, airborne early warning, airborne mine countermeasures and heads of state and government transport.



A single AW101 was delivered to Indonesia in early 2017

Right: The Royal Navy uses the AW101 Merlin in a variety of roles

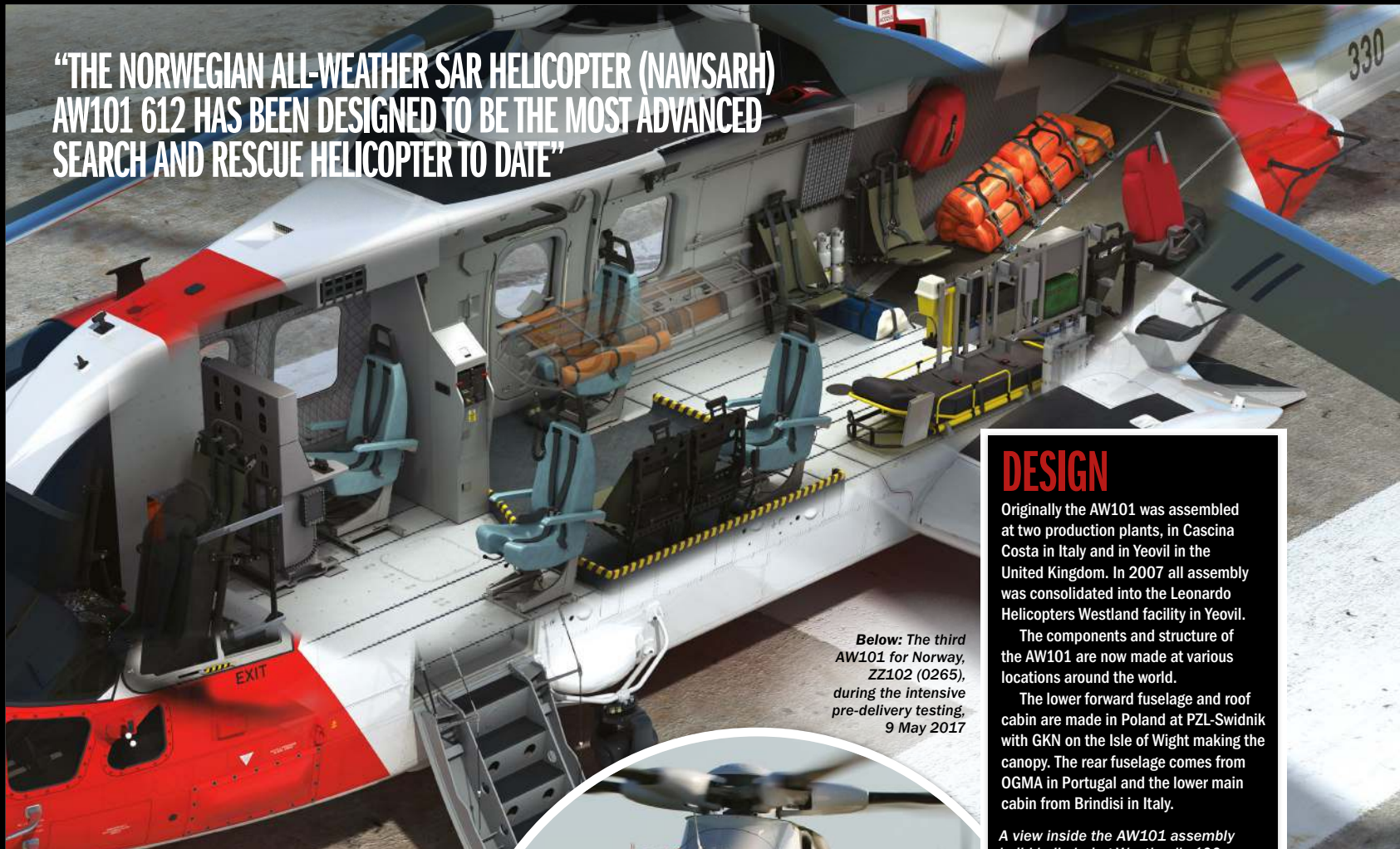


## AW101 MERLIN

**FIRST FLIGHT:** 9 OCTOBER 1987  
**ORIGIN:** AGUSTAWESTLAND, UK/ITALY  
**LENGTH:** 22.83M (74FT 11IN)  
**RANGE:** MAX RANGE 735 NM (1,363KM)  
**ENGINE:** GE CT7-8E TURBOSHAFT ENGINES  
**CREW:** 2



**“THE NORWEGIAN ALL-WEATHER SAR HELICOPTER (NAWSARH) AW101 612 HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO BE THE MOST ADVANCED SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTER TO DATE”**



*Below: The third AW101 for Norway, ZZ102 (0265), during the intensive pre-delivery testing, 9 May 2017*

## DESIGN

Originally the AW101 was assembled at two production plants, in Cascina Costa in Italy and in Yeovil in the United Kingdom. In 2007 all assembly was consolidated into the Leonardo Helicopters Westland facility in Yeovil.

The components and structure of the AW101 are now made at various locations around the world.

The lower forward fuselage and roof cabin are made in Poland at PZL-Swidnik with GKN on the Isle of Wight making the canopy. The rear fuselage comes from OGMA in Portugal and the lower main cabin from Brindisi in Italy.

*A view inside the AW101 assembly build hall, during Westland's 100 year centenary open day event*



*A very early production stage look at a Norway AW101*



## SEARCH AND RESCUE

The Norwegian All-Weather SAR Helicopter (NAWSARH) AW101 612 has been designed to be the most advanced search and rescue helicopter to date. 16 aircraft have been ordered, with the first delivery commencing in November 2017. Replacing the Westland Sea King currently in service with 330 Squadron, these 16 helicopters will operate from six airfields strategically placed around Norway.

The NAWSARH AW101 will feature the Leonardo-Finmeccanica's Osprey AESA radar and be equipped with the Laser Obstacle Avoidance (LOAM) and Obstacle Proximity LIDAR Systems. Other equipment includes a four-axis Digital Automatic Flight Control System (DAFCS), two rescue hoists, searchlight, electro-optical device, mobile telephone detection system and a fully integrated avionics and mission system.

The Osprey AESA radar, a flat panel antenna design, will be the first lightweight airborne surveillance radar to provide a 360-degree field of view without moving parts. Mounted in the fuselage itself, Osprey comprises three flat panels, one on the front of the helicopter and two at the rear, to create a 360-degree field of view.

This design will leave the helicopter's belly clear, maximising ground clearance for challenging rescue landings on rough terrain and snow in Norway.

Aircraft deliveries to the Royal Norwegian Air Force will continue through to 2020. As part of the contract, a 15-year 'turnkey' support solution will be delivered, comprising spare parts, technical support and training services.



*ZZ101, the second airframe built for Norway, seen here in full Norwegian markings. 22 August 2016*



## COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE

In 2009 the Italian Air Force made plans to replace its fleet of Agusta/Sikorsky HH-3 Pelican amphibious medium-lift helicopters.

The new helicopters' prerequisite included survivability, power and flexibility. The AW101 was chosen as the ideal replacement, and in 2010 a contract was signed for 12 new variant HH-101A 'Caesar' helicopters with an option of purchasing three more. The first production HH-101A made its maiden flight at AW, Yeovil on 19 March 2014.

The HH-101A is able to accommodate up to five crew members plus 20 fully equipped troops or six crew members plus 8 special operations troops. This ensures maximum mission flexibility. The helicopters also feature three M134 7.62mm pintle-mounted Gatling-type machine guns installed on the right and left sides and on the rear ramp armoured cockpit seats, ballistic protection for machine gun operators as well as for critical systems and an Integrated Electronic Warfare System. The HH-101A also features an air-to-air refuelling kit for extended-range operations.



Italy has ordered 15 HH-101A 'Caesars' to operate from Cervia airbase



HH-101A on static display at RNAS Merryfield

Below: ZR352/ MM81864 at Yeovil, 8 December 2014

THE HH-101A IS USED TO PERFORM PERSONNEL RECOVERY AND SPECIAL FORCES MISSIONS, REPLACING THE HH-3F PELICAN IN THE CSAR ROLE WITH THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE. THE HH-101AS WILL ALSO SUPPORT SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR), MEDICAL EVACUATION (MEDEVAC) AND SLOW MOVER INTERCEPT OPERATIONS.

**"THE HH-101A IS ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE UP TO FIVE CREW MEMBERS PLUS 20 FULLY EQUIPPED TROOPS"**





Troops from the Second Royal Gurkha Rifles, part of 16AAB, board a Merlin from the Royal Navy on Salisbury Plain during the exercise Merlin Storm in December 2014 (Photo: Mick Holland)

**“THE HC4/A AIRCRAFT WILL BE FULLY OPTIMISED FOR SHIP OPERATIONS, INCLUDING AUTOMATIC MAIN ROTOR BLADE FOLDING AND TAIL FOLD”**



**THE AW101 500 SERIES ENTERED PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE SERVICE ON 24 FEBRUARY 2005. SINCE BEING FORMED IN 1978, 751SQN HAS HELPED SAVE OVER 3,500 LIVES TO DATE.**

## THE FRONT LINE

845 and 846 Naval Air Squadron based at RNAS Yeovilton, Somerset, operate the AW101 Merlin Mk3/3A (HC3/A) that were previously in service with the Royal Air Force. These helicopters, configured for troop transport and utility, were transferred to the Royal Navy to replace its aging fleet of Sea King Mk4 helicopters.

Tailoring them for the naval role, Leonardo Helicopters are in the process of upgrading these aircraft to Merlin Mk4/4A (HC4/A) standard as part of the Merlin Life Sustainment Programme (MLSP) contract.

The HC4/A aircraft will be fully optimised for ship operations, including automatic main rotor blade folding and tail fold. The aircraft will also be fitted with the same cockpit as the Royal Navy's Merlin Mk2 aircraft, giving the Merlin fleet a common cockpit featuring five ten-by-eight inch integrated display units, two touch screen units for controlling the aircraft's systems and mission equipment, as well as two cursor control devices for cursor control of the tactical displays.

*A Royal Navy HC3, still with Royal Air Force titles, makes a confined landing on 26 February 2016*







This company AW101 has been an exhibit at trade shows across the world

## VVIP TRANSPORTATION

The AW101 can also function as a VVIP transport helicopter, bringing excellent levels of cabin comfort with air conditioning. A 1.83-metre cabin height provides stand-up headroom with the 2.49-metre width providing ample space for luxury seats and furnishings. A forward air-stair door provides access for VVIPs, with the staff able to use a rear stair entrance. The interior furnishings and systems can include VVIP and VIP seats, staff seats, secure communications, in-flight information, in-flight entertainment, washroom, shower, medical equipment and ballistic protection.

The VVIP AW101 variant also features a defensive Aids suite comprising Radar Warning Receiver (RWR), Laser Warning System (LWS), Missile Approach Warning System (MAWS), Countermeasures Dispensing System (CMDs), and Directed Infra-Red Countermeasures (DIRCM)

In August 2013 the AW101 VVIP company demonstrator was on static show at the International Aviation and Space salon MAKS in Zhukovsky, Russia. This VVIP AW101 also transported British Prime Minister David Cameron and the UK delegation during a two-day NATO summit in 2014, which was attended by more than 60 world leaders.

## SERVICE HISTORY

THE AW101 HAS BEEN EXTENSIVELY DEVELOPED AND MODIFIED FROM ITS ORIGINAL DESIGN CONCEPT AS A NAVAL SUBMARINE HUNTER

Merlins have been utilised as troop support during conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Merlin has also starred in a Bond movie, featuring in the 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony and has saved many lives as a SAR platform. In May 2017 the company VVIP demonstrator was leased to the Italian government to provide transportation during the 43rd G7 summit held in Taormina, Sicily.

Additionally the first Royal Navy AW101 HM1s to enter service have been modified and upgraded to HM2 standard,

representing the culmination of a decade of concept, design, integration and test, ensuring the Merlin continues to be the world's most potent submarine hunting helicopter. Rich Pittman's book, *The Merlin EH(AW) 101: From Design to Front Line*, is available from Amberley Publishing.

**“THE CULMINATION OF A DECADE OF CONCEPT, DESIGN, INTEGRATION AND TEST”**

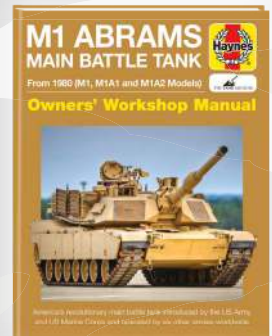
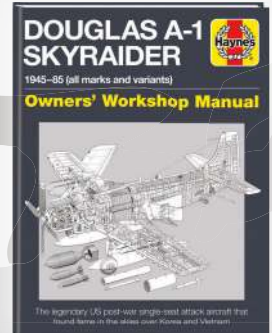


Above: Some of the memorabilia 751 Sqn in Montijo has collected from various rescue missions

Left: A Royal Navy Merlin resupplies HMS Cornwall, utilising its medium-lift capabilities for vertical replenishment



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## REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books &amp; films

# SQUADRON

## ENDING THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

**Author:** John Broich **Publisher:** Duckworth Overlook **Price:** £20

HOW FOUR MEN WAGED A PERSONAL WAR ON THE EVILS OF SLAVERY

Britain's decision to abolish slavery in the early 19th century has drawn the attention of many historians, but not many have looked in depth at the issue of enforcing the ban. The famous West Africa Squadron, established in 1819, had its work cut out patrolling the slave routes that criss-crossed the Atlantic, and it was forced to get by with minimal investment in terms of men and ships.

But the West Africa Squadron was lavishly equipped in comparison with the situation on Africa's east coast. It is the trade emanating from the east coast of Africa that John Broich has focused on, concentrating on the careers of four men who played an extraordinary role in policing an impossibly vast area.

Philip Colomb, Leopold Heath, Edward Meara and George Sullivan had varying motivations for their commitment to a tighter enforcement of the slave laws, but it was their personal determination as much as the power of their Amazon-class ships that drove their mission forwards. Colomb himself referred to the squadron as 'spiders', lurking at natural choke points on the slave routes to capture their unsuspecting prey. It was a rather unflattering comparison but an effective one.

Support for the catching of slavers was always equivocal. It was too lucrative a trade to be abandoned easily and many countries flouted treaties that limited the scope of the trade. Tied up in red tape, the British ships and men policing the region were often powerless in the face of brazen attempts to bypass the anti-slavery laws.

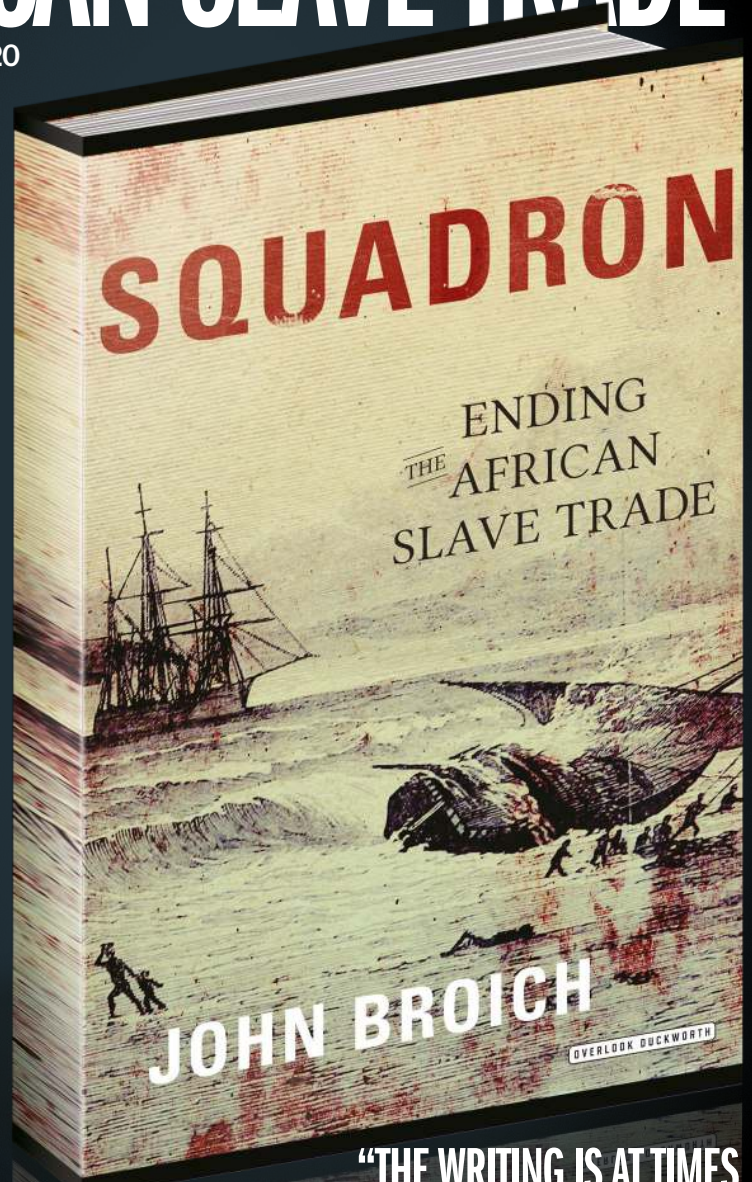
The ships that formed the heart of the squadron were a cut above the usual tired vessels that Britain committed to the task of policing the slave trade, but they still had to contend with political expediency, corruption and a lack of appetite to properly enforce the law.

This is a story as vast as the oceans it played out upon, and Broich has cleverly focused on the four British commanders, allowing the story to remain manageable and turning what could have been an impersonal recounting of events and statistics into a deeply immersive study of the personal attitudes involved.

Broich handles the immensity of his task with a deft hand. We follow the voyages of Daphne, Nympe and Dryad as they chase slave ships and handle corrupt politicians and merchants. The writing is at times poetic (the impact of a huge wave is described as 'the blind swing of a reeling titan'), while the action sequences are as engrossing as a novel.

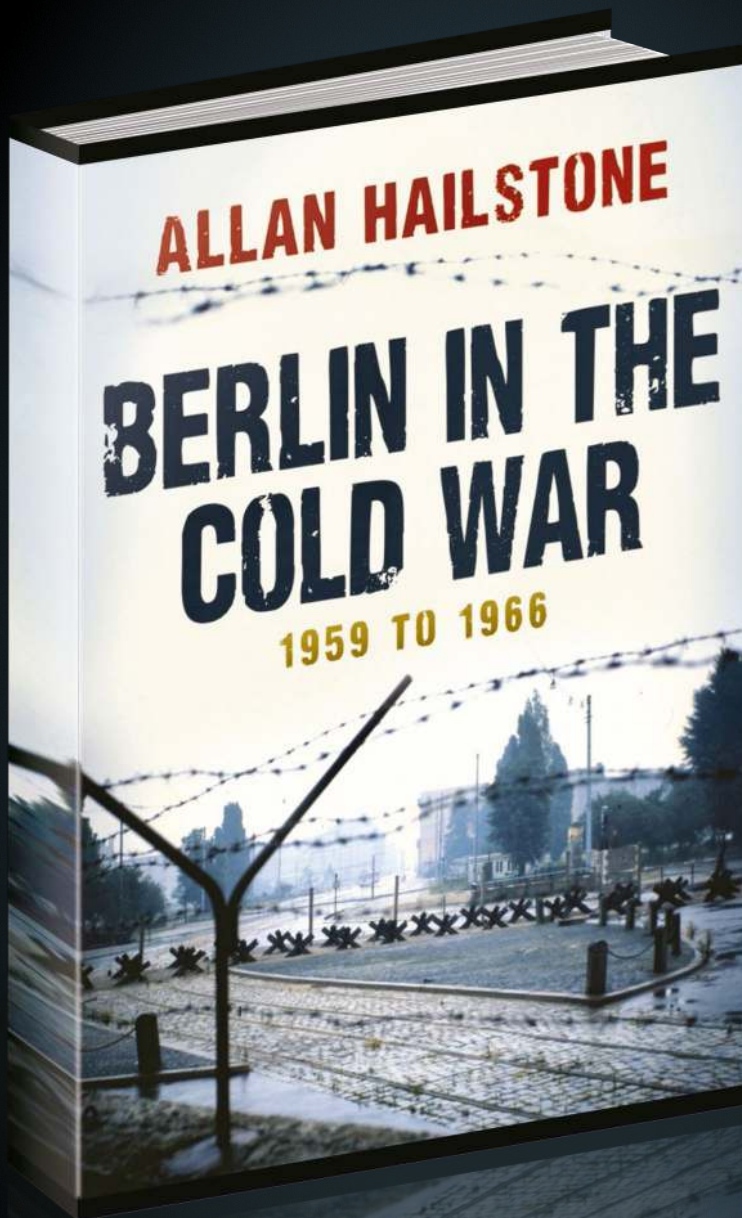
The depth of research necessary for Broich to take us so deep into the intimate running of Royal Navy vessels is remarkable – you never get the impression that he is anything less than completely informed on the subject.

The moral dilemmas wrestled with are also confronted head on. Would freed slaves necessarily have a better life to look forward to? "They entered a strange and hard world – their old world was irretrievably gone," Broich wrote, "but they entered it as free men."

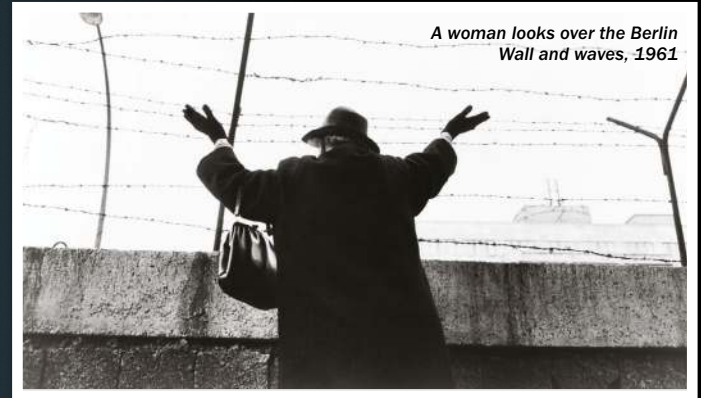


**"THE WRITING IS AT TIMES POETIC WHILE THE ACTION SEQUENCES ARE AS ENGROSSING AS A NOVEL"**

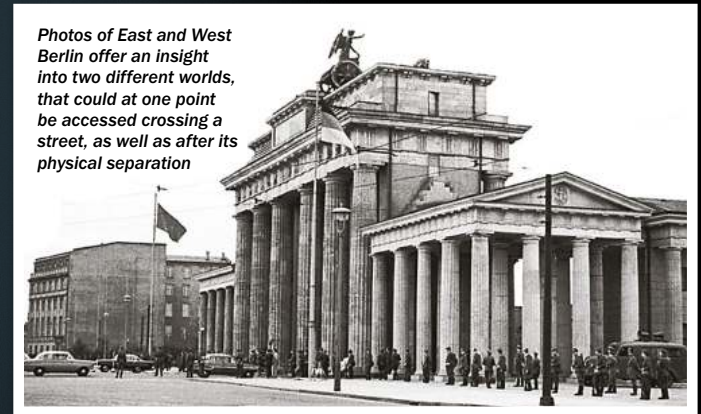




**“PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE PHOTOS INCLUDE THE FAÇADE OF THE STALINALLEE, INTENDED TO BE A LUXURIOUSLY WIDE SHOPPING BOULEVARD BUT IN REALITY BARELY MASKING THE DEVASTATION BEHIND IT”**



*A woman looks over the Berlin Wall and waves, 1961*



*Photos of East and West Berlin offer an insight into two different worlds, that could at one point be accessed crossing a street, as well as after its physical separation*

# BERLIN IN THE COLD WAR 1959 TO 1966

Author: Allan Hailstone Publisher: Amberley Price: £14.99

AN INTERESTING STROLL THROUGH THE STREETS OF BOTH WEST AND EAST BERLIN

Books of photographs need to work hard to keep a reader's attention. The danger is that you may find yourself dipping in repeatedly, opening the book at a random page to look at a few pictures and then putting it down again. Grabbing a reader and encouraging them to proceed through the book, as they would with a conventional narrative history, is something of a challenge.

Allan Hailstone hasn't quite pulled off this tricky feat, but he has still produced a book that has the ability to both educate and fascinate.

Almost without exception this book presents two photographs, each with lengthy captions, on each page. There are several images that would have benefitted from more exposure (not in a photographic sense, but in the sense of having a whole page to themselves), and the danger of presenting them in such a small format is that detail can be missed. There are evocative images here – piles of rubble in East Berlin from bombs that fell 15 years earlier, propaganda posters

covering a pillar, the site of Checkpoint Charlie before the Berlin Wall was constructed – and Hailstone's captions are informative (although sometimes a little repetitive). Their impact, however, is often minimised by their size. This is a slim volume, and a few more pages to allow some of the best images to be shown on a larger scale, would have been welcome.

Hailstone divides his book into 'Before the Wall' and 'After the Wall' sections, and with most of the images being black and white, there is an ominous feel to the book as a whole. The first section is particularly interesting, as it covers an era largely forgotten, when it was possible to move from one world to another simply by walking across a street. The wall, and the aftermath of its fall, has dominated our thinking of the city for so long that we tend to forget Berlin was once divided without its help.

The lengthy captions go some way to providing information on what we are seeing, but an overall textual narrative would have helped to put the

photographs into more of a context. A well-written introduction and short history of Berlin demonstrate that Hailstone would be perfectly capable of putting together such a narrative. As it is, the images tend to float in isolation, always having the ability to draw your attention but not always able to keep it.

Particularly effective photos include the façade of the Stalinallee, intended to be a luxuriously wide shopping boulevard but in reality barely masking the devastation behind it. Hailstone was also lucky enough to get the opportunity to snap Bobby Kennedy in 1964, and the quality of the image, as the unexpected motorcade glides past, is a testament to his ability with a camera.

There are also curious omissions. Hailstone mentions a rare jewel amid the brutalist architecture of East Berlin, the Kino International Cinema. Frustratingly, although we get two glimpses of parts of the cinema in separate photographs, we do not get a clear view of it.



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# STALINGRAD

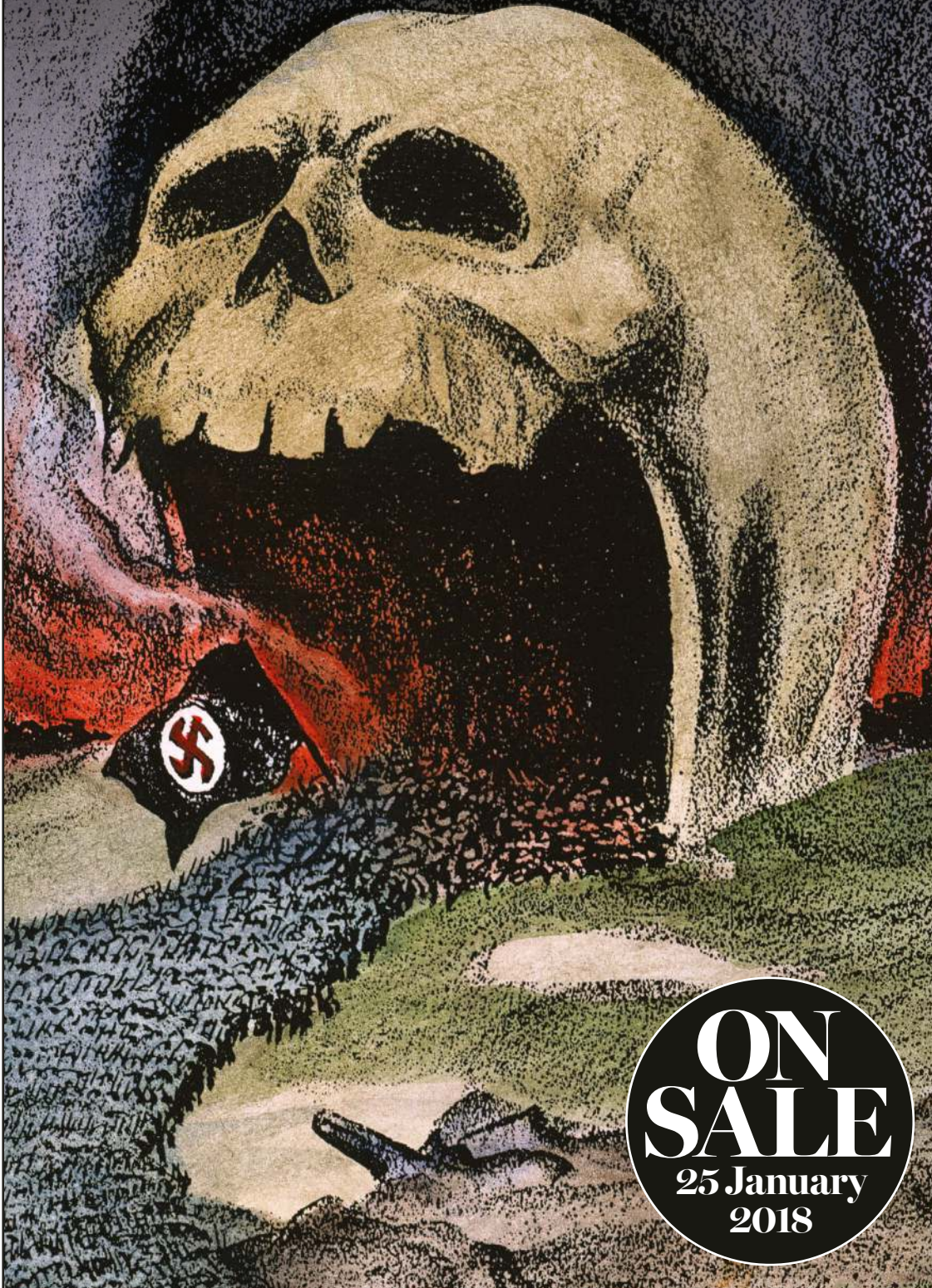


Image: Alamy

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**Editorial**

Editor **Tim Williamson**  
timothy.williamson@futurenet.com  
01202 586230

Senior Designer **Curtis Fermor-Dunman**  
Staff Writer **Thomas Garner**  
Production Editor **James Price**  
Group Editor in Chief **James Hoare**  
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

**Contributors**

Stephen Chambers, Murray Dahm, Stuart Hadaway, Frank Jastrzembki, Miguel Miranda, Richard Pittman, David Smith, William Welsh

**Cover image**

Jennifer Marshall - www.lighthorseart.com.au

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**Advertising**

Media packs are available on request  
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**  
clare.dove@futurenet.com

Regional Advertising Director **Mark Wright**  
mark.wright@futurenet.com

Advertising Manager **Samantha Novata**  
samantha.novata@futurenet.com  
01225 687 374

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**Circulation**

Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**  
01202 586200

**Production**

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Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**  
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*Making these lights would have been an act of passive resistance against strict Nazi blackout rules and confiscation in the Netherlands*

# WWII CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

This small set of wires and bulbs was a poignant attempt to celebrate the Yuletide festivities in the occupied Netherlands

**L**ike most western countries, Christmas is widely celebrated in the Netherlands, and the Dutch even have two versions of Father Christmas, who are celebrated on both 5 and 24 December. Nevertheless, 'goodwill to all men' was particularly hard to come by during World War II in the Netherlands thanks to the brutal occupation of the country by Nazi Germany.

The Netherlands was occupied for five years from May 1940 despite its attempts to remain neutral, as they had been during World War I. 75 per cent of Dutch Jews perished in the Holocaust, and the rest of the population also suffered despite the fact that the Nazis

considered the Dutch to be a 'superior' Aryan people. Over 200,000 Dutch citizens died during the war, not only from religious persecution but also by captivity, executions, forced labour, acts of war and malnutrition.

**"THE GERMANS USED MASS CONFISCATION TO AID THEIR WAR EFFORT AND TO KEEP THE LOCAL POPULATION UNDER CONTROL"**

Essential supplies were scarce during the occupation because the Germans used mass confiscation to aid their war effort and to keep the local population under control. Gasoline and food were the main shortages, but the Dutch even had to hand over their bicycle tyres so that the Germans could use the rubber. It was in this context that the pictured Christmas lights were made.

Constructed in Heerlen in the southeast province of Limburg, the lights are made out of bicycle lamps. It is safe to assume that the Germans had confiscated many bicycles and that the maker was improvising with what remained to bring some festive spirit to what was presumably a rather drab and subdued wartime Christmas.





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# Wittmann's Winter Tiger

**MICHAEL WITTMANN** is probably most famous for his military exploits during the first part of the Normandy Campaign in June 1944.

Less well known is his earlier successes on the Russian Front where he originally built his reputation as one of Germany's greatest 'tank-aces'. It was here that he 'honed' his skills beginning as a Stug III Assault Gun commander before converting over to the Panzer III Medium Tank.

By 1943 he was in charge of a mighty Pz.Kpfw. VI better known as the 'TIGER 1'. During the Battle of Kursk he was promoted to Platoon Leader and joined his division's reconnaissance battalion. His platoon of four Tigers destroyed scores of Soviet armour and anti tank artillery during the battle.

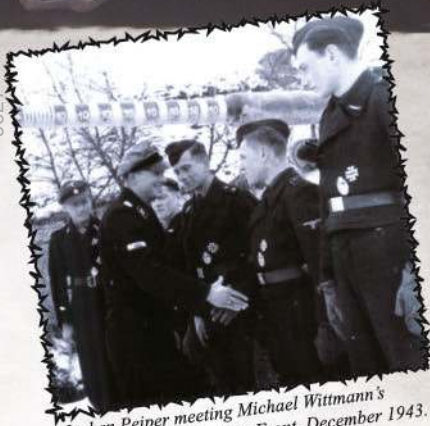
## HONOURS & AWARDS

In mid January 1944, Wittmann was awarded the prestigious 'Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross'. By the end of the month this was upgraded to the 'Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves'. Wittmann and his crew had destroyed 117 enemy tanks at this point.

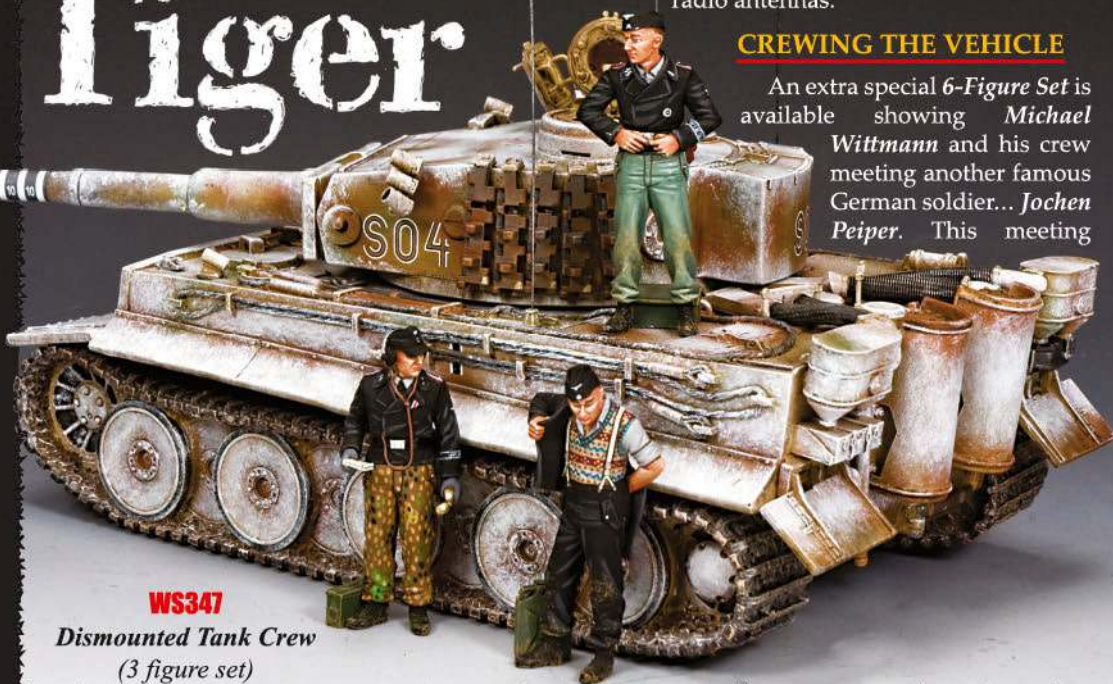
He received his award from Adolf Hitler personally at the Wolf's Lair, Hitler's head-quarters in East Prussia on 2 February 1944.

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Jochen Peiper meeting Michael Wittmann's tank crew on the Eastern Front, December 1943.



**WS347**

**Dismounted Tank Crew**  
(3 figure set)

## THIS 'NEW' TIGER

KING & COUNTRY's latest 'TIGER 1' (our 12th) is the best one yet! It represents Michael Wittmann's 'S04' as it appeared in the winter of 1943/44 when Wittmann's fame and reputation began to be known to the German public at large.

This 1:30 scale model features 2 x top turret hatches that open and close,

**WS344**  
**Wittmann's Winter Tiger**



**WS345**

**'When Wittmann met Peiper'**  
(6 figure set)

a main gun that fully elevates and carries 'kill markings' on the gun barrel itself.

It is also 'snow-camouflaged' although already showing the wear and tear of battle. As a command tank it has, in addition, 3 x radio antennas.

## CREWING THE VEHICLE

An extra special 6-Figure Set is available showing Michael Wittmann and his crew meeting another famous German soldier... Jochen Peiper. This meeting

was captured on film by Josef Goebbels Propaganda Ministry and given wide public coverage in the Nazi media of the time.

Elsewhere on this page you can see a set of less-formal Tiger tank crew that look great with this model.

To find out more simply contact King & Country or your nearest K&C Dealer.



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Suite 2301, 23rd Floor, No.3 Lockhart Road,  
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Tel : (852) 2861 3450 Fax : (852) 2861 3806  
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